



Class PZ7

Book E47 Rd.



THE RED PLUME

CHAPTER I

THE SIOUX OUTBREAK

It came about that in the summer of 1862, when many friends of the Union almost despaired of the success of our arms, and the most important battles in the field had gone against us, that a vicious outbreak occurred among the Sioux Indians of Minnesota. These people, known also as the Dakotas, are the most powerful tribe on the continent, and for a time they spread death and destruction, and caused a reign of terror over a large portion of one of the fairest States of the Union.

The outbreak occurred in the month of August, and was so sudden that, as is generally the case, hundreds of settlers were caught wholly unprepared. Recruiting for the Union armies was going on at the time, and after awhile, when other troops had been sent into the State, the revolt was quelled and summary punishment visited upon the most guilty

Near the central part of Minnesota is a romantic sheet of water about three miles in length, known as

Man-yo-han or Sleeping Water. On one shore stood the dwelling of grim old Captain Swarthausen, a veteran, who was at home just recovered from a wound received on the Peninsula. He had no family of his own, his housekeeper being Mrs. Muggins, whose husband looked after outside matters. The captain's nephew, George Havens, was fighting the battles of his country with the Army of the Cumberland.

On the opposite side of the lake was the home of John Fielding, a young Quaker, and his negro servant Pompey. The two were actively preparing the house for the parents of Fielding, who intended to remove thither from Philadelphia in the coming autumn. Close at hand, was the residence of the Prescotts, including the head of the family, Hugh, who was a wealthy consumptive, his wife, two daughters, Lillian and Edith, and two negro servants, Cato and Elijah, or "Lige," as he was always called. Dinah, the cook, was the mother of Cato, who naturally was her pet and pride.

It so happened that on this memorable day in August, the Prescott household was increased by still another in the person of Augustus Pipkins, a Chicago insurance clerk, and cousin of the young ladies, whose most puzzling problem, after his visit had lasted several days, was to determine which of the fair sisters he admired the most.

The Sioux outbreak reached Sleeping Water in a most peculiar manner. The younger members of the

Prescott household had gone for a sail on the lake, and the three lusty negro servants were lazily fishing on the banks of the lake, when a dozen Indians, in their war paint and fully armed, came from the wood as silently as so many shadows and made all three prisoners.

It need not be said that there was consternation, for no one expected mercy, but the incident was accompanied by another whose full significance was not understood until sometime afterward. One of the Sioux, known as Jarrik, an under chief, greeted the negro Lige with a grin, and, taking him to one side, talked with him in broken English. In truth, the two were old acquaintances, and the African, surly and reserved by nature, had furnished the chief more than once with whiskey.

While Cato and Pompey were bewailing their fate, Lige suddenly made a break for liberty, heading straight for the Prescott house, where young Fielding had gone. Several shots were fired at the fugitive, but they must have been poorly aimed, for he was untouched, and being admitted by Mr. Prescott, told his startling story, whose full meaning was instantly understood by all.

Meanwhile Captain Swarthausen had exchanged shots a short time before with the same party of marauders, so that he knew what was in the air.

The house in which Mr. Prescott and his family had dwelt during the last two years, was partly an exotic and partly a native of Minnesota.

In the first place he had had a neat little one-story cottage made in St. Louis. When this was put up in proper shape, he had it taken down and set up again on the shore of Sleeping Water Lake, it going through an experience very similar to the habitation of Captain Swarthausen.

It had stood here but a short time when he discovered that it was altogether inadequate to his wants. So he brought carpenters and masons from the nearest settlement, and erected an addition so large and roomy that it was really the main building, being two stories in height, cut up into convenient apartments, and constructed in the best style possible.

That portion of this house which migrated from St. Louis, of course was simply frame, which barely protected them from freezing during the first fearful winter that they spent in their new home. To prevent the recurrence of their suffering, every part of the building was "filled in" with stone, and the red pipestone clay, which is so plentiful in this State.

At the same time Mr. Prescott did not forget that his family incurred some danger in this solitude. Not that he ever dreamed of passing through anything like the Minnesota Massacre, for, had he believed such a catastrophe possible, he would have been the last man to remove his defenceless ones to their new home; but he knew that there were wild animals, which, when driven by hunger, were daring and ferocious; and evil men sometimes tramped through the border counties, and were not the most pleasant companions to encounter.

With these facts staring him in the face, his house was built. All the lower windows were protected by massive wooden shutters, and the doors were bullet-proof, and secured by such a series of bolts and locks that it was far easier for a man to cut and hack his way in than to burst them from their fastenings, or to succeed in picking the locks and bolts.

Of course this building, although the strongest one that stood along the lake, was not a fort, and could not be made to answer for one. It was vulnerable from almost any direction, and the dry, seasoned pine which entered largely into its composition made it as combustible as touch wood. The flames could be easily started, and when once under way would rage with resistless fury.

Then there were no means to stand a siege, even if the element of fire should not be employed by the Indians. There was a small quantity of food in the house, and not enough water to last more than a few days.

The Sioux really could not have chosen a more favorable time to attack the settlers. Captain Swarthausen was shut up in his own building, not only unable to get out and render any assistance, but sorely needing it himself. Pipkins and his two cousins were on the other side of the lake, while the two negroes were already prisoners in the hands of their enemies.

The forces were scattered and divided, and a half dozen Sioux, with a little circumspection, could fall upon them in detail and destroy them all.

Captain Swarthausen and Mr. Prescott could be easily burned out, Pipkins and the girls were defenceless, and could not hope long to escape discovery, so that so far as human foresight was concerned, there could be but one result to this expedition of the redskins.

The barn belonging to the Prescott house was situated within a stone's throw, directly back of it. Nothing could prevent the Indians from entering and firing this, and should the wind blow toward the lake, the house would be certain to follow its fate.

Indeed the sagacious Quaker had detected unmistakable signs of the Sioux having already ensconced themselves there; but, as there was not a breath of air stirring—the zephyr which had wafted the boat across the lake having entirely died away—there was little fear of a conflagration breaking out at present.

The long summer afternoon was wearing away, and night—dreaded night—the time when the treacherous red man steals to his work, was close at hand.

The sky was clear, but the moon was in its last quarter, and afforded so faint a light, that there was good cause for our beleaguered friends to fear the worst. No one dared hope that their enemies would remain idle during the favorable darkness so close at hand.

It was not strange that two men should come into the thoughts of the whites—two men whom, of all others, they longed to see.

These were Red Plume, a friendly Sioux, and Jubal

Judkins, or "Old Jud," as he was more generally known. These strange characters were companions who had often visited the Lake settlements, and had always received such hospitable treatment, that they formed a strong attachment for the settlers, and both Lillian and Edith had been the recipients of many curious mementoes and trophies of the chase from their dusky friend, and his hardly less dusky comrade.

Was it not more than probable that these men knew of the uprising of the Sioux? And if they did, would they not appear on the ground in time to befriend their imperilled friends.

These were the questions which suggested themselves, and to which Captain Swarthausen, Mr. Prescott and Fielding could not fail to give favorable answers.

As yet none of them had any idea that Red Plume was already on the scene of action, and was just getting to work. It was "Greek against Greek," and there was to be no child's play.

CHAPTER II

THE CANOE UNDER THE BANK

EVERYTHING within the Prescott house was speedily put in the best condition for defence. Mrs. Prescott, quiet, calm and self-possessed, never speaking above an ordinary conversational tone, moved hither and thither, carrying her great grief with her, and doing the hundred little things which are none the less necessary, and inspiring confidence by her freedom from the appearance of anything like despair.

Dinah had an immense kettle of water boiling on the stove.

“All I wants is de chance,” said she, in explanation, “and if I doesn’t scald some of dem niggers—dat’s all. Ef dey don’t bring my baby back, I’ll bile ’em all.”

There were four rifles in the house, and an abundance of ammunition. Prescott and Fielding, as a matter of course, were each provided with one, although it was to be remarked that the young Friend thus far had remained true to his faith and had not discharged his weapon, although the opportunity of effectually doing so had not been lacking.

Lige was also given a gun, and he seemed eager for a chance to help punish the marauders.

"All I wants is de chance," said he, "and I'll pay 'em for takin' Pomp and Cato, and 'sultin' me."

"I don't doubt it," replied Mr. Prescott; "do your duty, Lige, for you can see that our safety is yours, and if you behave like a man I will not forget you."

"Yes, sah," was the hearty response.

When Mrs. Prescott came to the upper story, and took the position assigned her, the whole four sides of the house, or more properly the different directions from which an assault of the Indians was possible, were under the surveillance of those within the building.

There were really but the two points from which they looked for danger—the rear toward the barn, and the west, but, as apparently the most unlikely points were aptest to be the very ones selected by the redskins, Fielding counselled all to relax none of their vigilance for an instant.

In the meantime, the young Friend had taken his station at an upper window, which commanded an unobstructed view of the lake, and with a small but powerful field-glass, was anxiously searching for the sail boat in which Pipkins and his cousins had set out upon their pleasure excursion.

"Verily there is danger on every hand," he muttered, as simultaneous with the spiteful crack of a rifle, the bullet cut a clean hole through the window pane, and passed within an inch of his face. "It behooves me to be more careful."

Moving a short distance back, he succeeded in pro-

tecting his face, while he retained the same view of the lake as before.

He first ran his eye rapidly over the water and shore and along the island near its centre, but not a sign of life was visible. Everything was drowsy and seemingly at rest on this hazy afternoon.

The yellow pine of Captain Swarthausen's little cottage could be partly seen through the shrubbery, but that too was silent, and devoid of all appearance of life.

The broad, silvery head of the Crescent River, where it started on its wanderings for the Arctic Sea, was the only break in the wall of green vegetation which encompassed Sleeping Water.

Failing to see anything with the naked eye, Fielding raised his glass and scrutinized the distant land with a closer gaze. He at first directed it toward Captain Swarthausen's cottage, and plainly discerned the form of an Indian creeping under the bank, as if he were seeking a new position. The Quaker watched him a few minutes until he disappeared in the undergrowth which was so plentiful here, as everywhere else.

He now directed his glass toward the river, and a flush lit up his face as he distinctly saw a stealthy movement under the bank.

At first, even with the aid of the telescope, he was unable to make out what it was; but as it slowly crept along under the partial shelter of the undergrowth, he made out that it was a small Indian canoe in which a single person was seated.

Whoever this individual was, it was plain that he in-

tended to conceal his movements, and so skillfully did he manage it, that when Fielding removed his glass and looked at it with the naked eye, he could detect nothing at all.

Still he crept along until one-fourth the circumference of the lake had been passed, by which time the canoe was less than a mile distant. Here the man halted, as if fearful of coming any further.

All this time Fielding was doing his utmost to detect the identity of the stranger, but as yet he had not succeeded, for only a slight portion of his body was revealed, and that only now and then, the boat seemingly impelled by a power of its own.

Only the stern of the canoe could now be seen, and for a long time that was as stationary as the island in the centre of the lake. Then the Friend distinctly saw a hunter's cap raised over the gunwale of the canoe, and slowly waved to and fro, as one would swing a bell.

This was done only once or twice, and then all was motionless again; but it was enough. The eye of the young man sparkled as he laid down his glass, and he walked back and forth in no little excitement.

"Most grievously am I mistaken, if that is not the hunter Judkins, and he is seeking to communicate with the man, Red Plume. We have need of such friends as these."

He picked up his glass again, but at this moment Mrs. Prescott touched his shoulder, and whispered:

"I am afraid something wrong is going on. I don't like the actions of Lige; please come with me."

CHAPTER III

RED PLUME

“WHAT dost thou see?” asked Fielding without moving out of the room.

“I think Lige is signalling to some one in the wood.”

“I placed him there because I thought he would be less likely to see the heathen than thy husband; but truly I was mistaken. Do thou remain here while I go to him, but let me caution thee against approaching the window too close. It was a narrow escape I had from my rashness.”

It was the wish of the young Quaker to come in upon Lige so softly as to detect him in the act, whatever it might be, but the fellow caught sight of him, and was as mum and motionless as the furniture of the room.

“Hast thou discovered anything?” he inquired, as the African looked around at him.

“Nuffin.”

“Have seen no indications of the heathen?”

“Can’t ’zactly say dat, Mister Fielding.”

“Pray what is it?” asked the latter, his conscience pricking him at his misjudging the fellow.

“I’ve seen two or free of dem sneakin’ round de

barn, and dere's lots of dem in it. 'Spect *dar's* whar de trouble will begin."

"Thou talkest sensibly; keep a bright look-out."

"Yes, sah."

Fielding passed to the room of Mr. Prescott, who, with rifle in hand, was cautiously peering out of the window commanding the approach of the wood, he having changed places with Lige, who had the rear of the house under his guardianship.

The young man was in a dilemma. Fully aware of the violent temper of Mr. Prescott, he dreaded to arouse it by awakening his suspicion of his servant, and, at the same time, it seemed necessary to put him on his guard.

Furthermore, he wished to place the negro under surveillance, without having him suspect it. The few words of conversation that had just passed between Lige and Fielding had almost, but not quite, convinced the latter of his honesty, and he desired to have the point cleared up, and to dissipate that dreadful sense of insecurity which was constantly creeping over him.

He exchanged a few words with Mr. Prescott, incidentally mentioning that the Sioux were undoubtedly scattered and concealed, so as almost entirely to surround the house, and that they would not be long in discovering an unguarded point.

This was all that he felt safe in saying, when he returned to his station; for he had a strong desire to watch the movements of that canoe that had come out

of Crescent River, and moved so cautiously around the coast of the lake.

“ I trust thou misjudged thy servant,” said he, as he returned to his station. “ He seems to be on the alert, and quite trusty.”

“ It may be so, John, but I am sorry that he was allowed to re-enter the house. I would rather have him on the outside.”

“ Do thou endeavor to look in upon him when convenient, and if thou seest anything wrong, instantly apprise me of it.”

With this admonition the two separated, Mrs. Prescott going to the end room, which was her own bed-chamber, and was at the opposite side of the house from where her husband was stationed.

Directing his field-glass toward the point where he had seen the signal from the canoe, he was not a little surprised and disappointed to find that the latter was gone.

The place was so fixed in his mind that he could not mistake it, and there was nothing to be seen. Old Jud, the hunter, had changed his position in the few minutes during which Fielding had been absent from his post.

The sun was still an hour high, and his slant rays penetrating through the woods in many places, lit up the surface of the lake, giving it a glowing splendor like unto molten gold.

Turning his gaze toward the house of Swarthausen, everything was seen to be as lifeless as if no living

being were within miles. If the family were still besieged, it was with the same persistent quiet with which the Prescotts themselves were surrounded. The Sioux were probably waiting for night, before striking what they intended to be the final blow.

Fielding was gazing in this wandering manner, not knowing where to look for the canoe, but supposing that it had been drawn so far up under the bank as to make it invisible, when he made another discovery, that gave him greater wonder than before.

From the source of the Crescent River, where the lake poured out its surplus water, he saw another boat issue, following precisely in the track of the canoe, which had preceded it by something over an hour.

As he scrutinized this, however, he observed that it was of different construction, and considerably larger than the small vessel, and like that, contained but a single person.

The wonderment of the Quaker was not a little increased when he recognized the boat as the identical one in which Pipkins and the girls had crossed the lake. The sail and even the small mast was gone—proof that the individual controlling it was taking every means to avoid observation.

Fielding's first thought was, that the party had been captured, and this was one of their captors proceeding to some point with the boat.

But he could not satisfy himself on this point, as he could think of no reason for such a course being pur-

sued. There must be some other explanation of the singular proceeding.

Steadily the large boat followed in the wake of the smaller, taking precisely the same course, but checking its speed before it had proceeded to so great a distance.

Now and then the Friend resumed his glass, and attempted to follow the movements of the boat with his eye, but found it so difficult that it practically amounted to nothing.

The next moment the mystery of the occupant was explained. Something red flashed out upon the air, and the eye of the Friend sparkled again.

“ Verily, it is Red Plume ! ”

CHAPTER IV

THE FUGITIVES ON THE RIVER

RED PLUME, the friendly Sioux, had suddenly presented himself to the cousins on the other side of the lake and warning them to keep out of sight, departed with the boat to give what help he could to their friends, who were in great danger.

The sisters sat side by side. The face of the elder was blanched with her great fear, and she held her right arm around the waist of the younger, whose head was pillowed on her shoulder, while her face was covered with her two hands, pressing her handkerchief as if to keep back the overwhelming sorrow.

In that hour of supreme woe, the sisters, with the trusting faith of childhood, were sending up petitions to the Great Being for the safety of those whom they had left behind, and who were in such dire extremity.

Not a tear moistened the eye of Edith, who seemed to be gazing through the interstices of the undergrowth, up the river and across the lake to her friends, who in turn were looking for her; but who shall doubt the great woe that was weighing her down, and almost checking the flow of the life-current in her veins?

Lillian was swayed like a leaf in the tempest. Her frame quivered and shook, and the hot tears dropped through her fingers, while she nestled, like a frightened bird, closer to her stronger sister, who drew her warmly and lovingly to her embrace. The arrow aimed the highest has the farthest to fall. Naturally light-hearted and joyous, with spirits like the morning sunlight, her depression was all the greater, and the darkness the more gloomy, when the change did come.

They sat without speaking, for what could either say to comfort the other? There was but one Source to which they could look, and the hearts of both were earnestly fixed upon that blessed Refuge.

Pipkins sat at the other end of the boat, now and then looking dolefully and askance at them.

"Jingo, this is rough!" he repeated, as he began nervously searching his pockets. "My pipe has gone out, and I hain't got a match."

As is apt to be the case with those similarly circumstanced, he examined each pocket at least a half-dozen times, continually "pulling" furiously at his pipe, as if there were a spark lingering somewhere in it.

"No use," he finally exclaimed, with a despairing look. "The pipe is extinguished, and I hain't a match. I say, Edith, you hain't got such a thing as a lucifer about you?"

When he had repeated the question several times she merely swayed her head, without removing her fixed gaze from the direction of the lake.

“ I don’t ’spose Lil has any? ”

But no attention was paid to the hint, and he did not press it.

“ Just as like as not we’ll have to stay here all night,” he soliloquized; “ and I’ll catch cold, and be laid up a week. If I had a match it wouldn’t be so thundering bad—bless the Lord! ”

All the time he was fumbling and thrusting his thumbs into his pockets, and his exclamation was caused by his fishing up the fraction of a match with the phosphorus upon it.

“ Ain’t that jolly, now! ” he added, as he twisted up his last love-letter, the better to catch the flame. Then bending down, so that his body and the two sides of the boat kept away whatever puff of wind might be in the air, he carefully struck it upon the dry, painted board.

The result was all that he could wish; and, a few seconds later, his head was enwreathed in the volumes of tobacco smoke that issued from his mouth.

“ That mends things somewhat. Lillian, confound it! what’s the use of feeling so bad? ”

But neither of the sisters paid any heed to this practical question; and, after surveying them a moment or two, he added:

“ Edith, hangnation! what’s the use? If you keep on that way you’ll make *me* feel bad.”

This he considered an unanswerable appeal; and it did cause his cousin to turn her dark eyes reproachfully upon him.

“How can we help it?”

“I know—I know. But then cheer up—what’s the use? Try and keep it back on account of *me*. If you go on that way you’ll have me in the blubbering business, too, before long.”

The few words uttered by Edith seemed to open her heart, and, for a few minutes, her grief was more violent in its manifestations than Lillian’s; but, by-and-by, it spent itself with both, and they became more calm and composed.

During these trying moments Augustus Pipkins solemnly smoked his meerschaum, and wondered which was the shortest route back to Chicago, and, whether, if a favoring breeze should spring up, it wouldn’t be a wise plan to crowd on all sail down the river, and get out of this dangerous neighborhood.

He said nothing while his cousins were in the tempest of their grief. When it had passed over, and they had calmed down and uncovered their faces, he ventured to console them in his own peculiar way.

“I don’t believe the folks are *all* killed. It would take considerable time for the Indians to do that.”

“Dolph, how can you talk so!” was the reproving response of Edith, who could scarcely restrain another outburst.

“I—I meant to comfort you,” he stammered; “but that’s the way I always put my foot in it. I told our colored washerwoman, when she was blubbering about her little boy that kicked the bucket, that she ought to be

thankful for it, because, if he had lived to grow up, he wouldn't have been anything but a nigger; and never, after that, would she put a smitch of starch in my shirts, except just where I didn't want it."

"I wonder whether Red Plume will get there soon enough to help them?" said Lillian, whose face showed that some degree of hope was returning.

"I think so," replied her sister. "If—if he had not, we should hear the shots of the Indians, and see the smoke of the burning buildings; but I haven't heard the report of a gun since he went away."

"Sh!"

At that instant the distant sound of the rifles fired by the Sioux, as Lige rushed into the house, came across the lake, and penetrated the concealment of the girls.

"What does that mean?" asked Lillian, trembling again with her nervous fear.

"Oh, that's nothing!" replied Pipkins, still smoking his pipe. "I've read in Cooper that the redskins fire promiscuously when they get a chance, and it ain't likely they've killed more than one or two of your folks; but then Cooper always makes his females get shot at the last minute, so we won't quote him as authority."

"I wish old Jud would come," added Lillian; "why did I not think to ask Red Plume about him?"

"They seem to be together nearly all the time," replied Edith.

"I tell you what," said Pipkins, with the air of a man who was about to reveal a tremendous secret, "I've got a plan!"

He puffed his meerschaum more vigorously than ever, while the cousins looked as if they did not understand what it meant.

"You have a plan for what?" inquired Edith, seeing that he was waiting to be questioned.

"For our escape. Would you like to hear it?"

Supposing his scheme included *all*, he received an affirmative reply.

"We must keep out of sight till dark, as your friend Red Plume remarked. But when it is fairly dark, we'll hoist sail, and let her went, till daylight, when we'll lie-to till night, and keep the thing up till we reach some of the settlements."

"You don't mean for us to go and leave father and mother behind?" asked Lillian, in amazement.

"The idea exactly."

"You cannot be in earnest, certainly, Dolph?"

"Never more in earnest in my life. We can't help them any by staying, for like as not they are all killed by this time—"

"There, there, don't," she plead, raising her hand and turning her head, as if to ward off the fearful proposal.

"Beg pardon—at it again, I see—but what I wanted to get at was, that it's the best thing all around, for we can't help them. If they're still alive, they've got their hands full, and will be glad to get us out their way, and they won't have us to think about—don't you see?"

But neither of the sisters would consent for a mo-

ment to any such movement. It looked too much like desertion, and besides, they would be disobeying the parting injunction of Red Plume, who certainly ought to be able to give the best advice about such matters.

It was undeniably the truth, that the plan of Pipkins was a good one. There was every prospect of their being able to reach Forest Grove, the nearest settlement, by using care and circumspection in their movements; but, when the young man found that his scheme could not be forced upon his cousins, he seemed to feel that some explanation was necessary.

"You see it ain't myself that I care about, girls—*that* has never once entered my head—but it is *you*."

"We do not wish to leave the vicinity until our parents can go with us."

"I was about to say that my vacation expires this week, and if I expect to reach Chicago in time, I ought to be on my way this very night. Old Blifkins gets as mad as thunder when any of the clerks disappoint him. *That* is the only thing that gives me any anxiety."

"You ought to be home then, by all means," replied Edith. "Lillian and I will go ashore and wait in the woods, while you can take the boat and make a good start to-night."

Pipkins started, and looked earnestly at the speaker, but her face was serious, and his heart throbbed at the unexpected hope thus held out to him.

He was seated on the very prow of the boat, so that he was perched quite up in the air.

What answer he would have made to this proposition, had the opportunity been given, it is impossible to say, but just then Lillian started, and half rose to her feet, with such an expression of terror upon her face, that Pipkins instantly slid down from his perch, and demanded what the mischief was now on hand.

“ I saw an Indian coming up the river in a canoe.”

“ Where? ” fairly gasped Pipkins, crouching down and glaring about him, as if there were instant danger of collision.

“ It is a long way off. I saw something move just in line with you. I took it to be an insect at first, creeping over your coat, and was about to speak, when I noticed that it was a canoe coming up the other side the river.”

“ I don’t see it,” said the young man, cautiously looking in the direction indicated by Lillian.

“ Nor I,” added Edith.

“ It has gone; it seems to be coming along the shore, as though the Indian was trying to keep out of sight.”

“ If that is the case, I think we had better get out of this,” said Pipkins. “ Let us get nearer shore and hide in the woods somewhere, till the savage goes by.”

“ Do you think there is any danger of our being seen? ”

“ Shouldn’t wonder, but I can’t say sure.”

Grasping the limbs and undergrowth (the mast having been previously unshipped), the boat was drawn as close under the bank as was possible.

A hurried debate followed as to whether it was best

to remain where they were, or to step ashore, and go further into the wood. Pipkins was anxious to do the latter, and Lillian was inclined to think it was best, but Edith, with characteristic sense, said that the boat would be as likely to be seen, whether they were in it or not, and if seen, an Indian would require but a few minutes to trace them through the woods. Nothing, therefore, was to be gained by leaving the boat.

It was decided that each should keep his or her head below the gunwale, so as not to be seen by any one passing, and wait before raising the head until sure that the canoe had disappeared around the bend above.

“Sh! down” whispered Lillian, “I see it again, only a little way off.”

Every head was ducked, and for the next five minutes, the listeners could hear the pulsations of their own hearts. Then Edith called the attention of Pipkins to the fact that he was smoking, and might betray their presence by that means. Loth to allow his pipe to go out, and yet sensible of the risk, he held it down in the bottom of the boat, giving it a slight puff now and then to keep it from expiring altogether.

Soon the soft dip of a paddle could be heard, and their hearts almost stopped beating as they speedily learned that it was approaching.

Still praying that they might not be seen, all kept silent; but nigher and nigher it came, until the rustling of the undergrowth showed that the canoe was close at hand, and coming still closer each second.

Hardly conscious of what he did, Pipkins raised his head, and no pen can picture his horrified consternation, as he saw the boat less than a dozen feet distant, and heading straight toward them.

CHAPTER V

OLD JUD

“WAL, now, if that doesn’t beat all natur!” exclaimed a gruff, cheery voice, as the tiny canoe glided gracefully beside the larger boat, and a grizzled, rough borderer looked over in it at the blanched faces and cowering forms. “Thar’s my little Rosebud,” he added, his homely face relaxing into a pleased smile, as he recognized Lillian, “and my Queen Edith,” he added, turning toward the sister; “and, if I ain’t powerfully mistaken, that’s Spider Legs.”

It would be hard to picture the relief experienced by all, as they recognized in their visitor, not some ferocious Sioux in his war paint, but Old Jud, the hunter, the very man, whom, of all others, they were longing to see.

He shook hands with them all, and then inquired what was meant by their peculiar situation. In a few minutes everything was told. During the narration, he sat perfectly motionless, with his keen gray eyes fixed upon Edith, as if he did not wish to lose a word she uttered.

“Old Jud,” as he was commonly called, was a man about fifty years of age, tall, thin to emaciation, with

sparse, iron-gray hair, and a short cropped grizzly beard, which covered his face to his eyes. His teeth were as sound and clear as pearls, and when he laughed, which he did frequently, by expanding his broad mouth into a still broader grin, and opening it without making the least articulate sound, it added not a little to the prepossessing character of his face.

His brows were heavy and beetling, the gray eyes shining beneath like the watch fires of the soul. His skin was as brown as a nut, and his muscles like iron, and, furthermore, his great height was made to look much greater than it really was, by a decided stoop of the shoulders.

Such characters as Jud generally own a horse or a dog, or more generally both, but he owned neither. What was certainly rather curious, he seemed to dislike a canine animal, but regarding the equine, he showed no dislike, but rather indifference. He was a sort of amphibious animal. He reached and returned from his hunting and trapping territory, by means of water, never travelling across wide stretches of prairie or open country, when on one of these expeditions, unless he was compelled to do so; but he was nearly always to be found in the vicinity of some stream, which communicated directly with the navigable rivers below.

Although Pipkins had never noticed Jud, yet the latter had "taken his measure" some time before, when he had seen him at a considerable distance, and he formed no very exalted opinion of him.

“ Me and Red Plume was on a hunt yesterday,” said he, in answer to the numerous questions, speaking with a quiet deliberation that was peculiarly effective in giving hope and confidence to his listeners, “ when we seed things ahead that looked rather squally. We come onto a camp-fire, about a dozen miles down the river, this noon, and the redskin said right away that it was a party of his people on their way to the lake. I wasn’t so sartin of it, but he started ahead on the trail, and told me to hurry along with the canoe.”

“ Why didn’t you come together? ” asked Lillian.

“ Wal, the principal reason was that I thought as how we might need the canoe. You see, if there is trouble, and it looks as though you folks had better leave, we’re gwine to take you off in boats, being as it will be handier to manage than if we tramp through the woods.”

“ Then you *do* think we shall get away together? ” asked Lillian, her face all aglow with the bright hope.

“ That’s what we’re going to try to do, Rosebud,” replied the hunter, his grizzled features lighting up with affection as he looked upon the trusting girl.

“ And we are to wait here? ” inquired Edith.

“ Depend on it, gals, that what Red Plume told you was for the best. There ain’t many things about the woods that that ’ere redskin don’t know. What airthly use can you be there? ”

“ But suppose the Sioux withdraw,” added Edith, “ and no one is injured in the house? *They* will be safe,

but how will it be with us, especially if they find out that we are somewhere in the woods? Indeed I think they must know it already."

"No doubt about that; they couldn't help seeing you going across the lake."

"Then is not our situation dangerous?"

"You forget you're hid."

"We remember *that*, and remember, too, that the first man coming up the river discovered us."

"That was your own fault. I seed you afore you hauled yourselves further under the bank. Even then I wouldn't have got eyes on you, if it hadn't been for Spider Legs roosting up on the bow as if he were stuck out for a clothing sign, and puffing away like a steam engine."

"You didn't see the smoke, now, did you?" inquired Pipkins, somewhat red in the face at this "personal allusion."

"When you hauled the boat further under, and he hopped down from his roost, I couldn't see hide nor hair of you—but all I had to do was to foller the streak of smoke, and that brought me straight to the spot."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Pipkins, as he knocked the ashes from his meerschaum, "if that's the case, I'll shut up shop."

"Then we are to remain here until you or some one returns?"

"That's the idee."

"But for how long?" asked Lillian.

“Very likely till morning. When we’re trying to help the others, I won’t forgit to keep an eye in this direction, and somebody will be along to see you by daylight at least.”

“I hope they will be *friends*,” remarked Pipkins, with a ghastly grin. “You see we haven’t got as much as a revolver—”

“What would you do with a revolver, if you had it?” laughed Jud.

“A man who has fought as many duels as I have has some right to be considered a pretty good shot,” replied Pipkins, with a desperate attempt at bluster.

“If I get a chance I’ll send you a cannon to practice on,” laughed Jud; “and that reminds me that young Havens has come home rather suddenly to help put down these Sioux.”

“Where is he?” asked Lillian, rather more eagerly than her cousin liked.

“I heard he was down at Fort Grandon, but it ain’t likely he’ll be able to git up here in time to be of any help. But it won’t do for me to wait; Red Plume is expecting me; and keep quiet—cheer up, and hope for the best.”

And with this parting, the hunter sped swiftly up the stream; and, if ever earnest prayers went up to the Throne of Grace for the success of a daring undertaking, they ascended from the hearts of the two sisters as their friend vanished from sight.

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO SCOUTS

WE have already shown how the hunter Jud, after leaving the river, coursed along the shore of the lake, halting at no great distance from the Prescott cottage.

In doing this his object was to communicate with and discover his Indian comrade, Red Plume—a delicately difficult task, when at the same time it was necessary to avoid the other treacherous members of his race.

His supposition was that the friendly Sioux was either in the house or in its immediate vicinity, and he purposely exposed his canoe to any one in the building who might be looking out upon the water for him. He knew his dusky friend was expecting his appearance, and one glimpse of the boat would be sufficient; so he cautiously advanced as near as was prudent, and then halted under the bank.

Whether Red Plume was in the house or not, he could not determine. As yet he had received no notification of such being the fact; but, to make sure, he made the signal we have described, by swinging his hunting cap over the stern of the canoe.

Receiving no response to this, after waiting a short time, he shoved his boat further under the bank, con-

vinced that the Sioux had not succeeded in entering the house. It now remained for him to reach him by some audible signal, such as was in common use between them when hunting.

There was great risk in making an outcry, for no matter how skillfully he might imitate the call of some animal or bird, it would be sure to reach hostile ears that would suspect its meaning.

Fortunately, the necessity saved him; for while he was hesitating, the bushes parted, and Red Plume stood before him.

This remarkable redskin had been looking for the canoe of his friend, and had seen it from the first moment it entered the lake, and, as soon as it halted, he made haste to join his friend.

The meeting, as a matter of course, was cordial, as it always was between these two singular characters; but it was not their custom to indulge in any demonstrations such as would have been natural between two comrades of long and tried friendship. There was business before them.

A few minutes sufficed for Red Plume to hear all that Jud had to say, and to impart the information he possessed.

The Sioux were mostly on the other side of the house, in the wood, where several of them were holding the house under close surveillance, but they seemed to be waiting until the cover of night before making any further demonstration. There were several of them in

the barn, although what their ultimate intentions were could only be conjectured.

The hunters decided upon attempting two performances, both of which were perilously difficult, but which they believed could be accomplished. Red Plume proposed to enter the cottage, acquaint the inmates with the precise condition of affairs on the outside, and instruct them as to the course for them to pursue in the attempts that would probably be made by the Sioux in the course of the next few hours.

But before doing this, it was determined to free Captain Swarthausen from his enforced imprisonment, as he and Muggins would add not a little to the strength of the party, which needed every arm and gun that they could possibly procure.

The Sioux had learned that the captain was now besieged by only two Indians, while the others were congregated near the Prescott house, so as to be prepared for an assault or any peculiar method of attack that their leader might wish. Before it could be prevented, the hunters could steal upon these redskins, speedily put them *hors du combat*, and release the beleaguered family.

Then, with the additional force thus gained, there was some prospect of doing something against the main body of redskins.

As it looked as though it might be necessary to get the Prescotts out of their house, and to flee with them, the cautious Red Plume determined to make everything ready for this contingency.

Accordingly, he sped with all haste to where the fugitives were concealed in the river, placed them in as secure a place as possible in the wood, and then propelled the boat to a point as near the building as it was discreet to approach.

By the time this was done the sun was setting, and time had become precious. A half hour later the two had approached within a few hundred yards of Captain Swarthausen's house, and began carefully reconnoitering it.

The result of this was the discovery of the curious fact that one of the two redskins referred to had withdrawn and joined the main body, while the other composed the entire besieging force.

The audacious villain was stretched out on the bank, directly in front of the house, where his own body was effectually protected from any danger from those within, while with loaded rifle, he commanded the entrance to the building.

Had those within been aware of this curious situation of affairs, they could have emerged from the back windows and walked away without fear of disturbance; but Captain Schwarthausen very naturally believed that every portion of his home was continually scanned by his enemies, vigilant and watchful for the first opportunity to accomplish their design.

When Red Plume became certain of the precise condition of affairs, he took upon himself the task of disposing of the savage who was taking matters as coolly

as if he had everything his own way, and was going to wait until the ripe fruit fell into his hand.

With the stealthy, crouching tread of the panther, he stole upon his unconscious victim, who looked continually in the front, and never once in the rear. When the two grappled, the struggle was brief and fierce, but Red Plume emerged from it without a scratch, while his antagonist never emerged from it at all.

It now remained to apprise Captain Swarthausen of the raising of the siege. As Red Plume was in the usual paint and dress of his people, the probabilities were that he would not be recognized, but would be fired upon the instant he showed himself.

As it was now almost dark, there was some fear that Jud, in his half-civilized dress, would also be subject (although in a less degree) to the danger. On account of the proximity of their enemies, it would not do to halloo or make any outcry, as their suspicions would instantly be aroused; so, perforce, he did as follows:

Placing his hunting-cap on the end of his ramrod, he waved it back and forth over his head, to show that he had no gun with him, and at the same time had something to say to those within.

Captain Swarthausen at this moment was on the watch, and detected the figure approaching; but in the gloom, rendered deeper by the shadows of the trees, he failed to identify it. Believing it to be some device of his foes, he raised the hammer of his rifle and drew a bead upon it.

But while his finger was already pressing the trigger, it struck him that there was something so un-Indian-like in the appearance of the form approaching that he lowered his piece again, and scrutinized it more closely. Still unable to make it out, he hailed it,

“Halt! who comes there?”

The hunter obeyed orders, and called back his name.

This was sufficient, but the captain did not understand precisely how matters stood.

“Be careful, Jud; we are surrounded by Indians.”

“Thar isn’t a redskin near you,” was the reply, as he strode toward the door, which opened before him.

“Lor’ bless you, Jud!” exclaimed Mrs. Muggins, as she threw her arms around his neck, and hugged and kissed him in her transport of joy. “I can’t tell you how glad we are to see you.”

“Then ’spose you don’t try jist now,” he replied, not rudely disengaging the muscular arms which were almost suffocating him.

Captain Swarthausen and Muggins shook him cordially by the hand, and almost overwhelmed him with their exuberant delight.

While they were talking, Red Plume appeared beside them, with the suddenness and silence of a shadow, and he was greeted none the less warmly.

It required but little time to state what was wanted, and to agree upon their course of action. Mrs. Muggins was to be taken down the river, and left with Lillian and Edith, while her big husband joined the effective force that was to operate against the Sioux.

“ And I shall have to leave the house entirely unprotected? ” remarked Captain Swarthausen.

“ I don’t jist see how you’re going to help it,” replied Jud.

“ Nor I neither; so don’t let me delay you.”

Mrs. Muggins was placed in the canoe of the captain, which, when not in use, lay moored under the bank, while Red Plume took upon himself the task of conveying her to the retreat in the woods.

As the good lady moved away, she gave her trembling husband her parting injunctions, enforcing them by threats of the direst penalties; and there is no telling when she would have ceased, had not her escort peremptorily ordered her to do so, from fear that the tumult would reach the Indians further up the lake.

A few minutes later, Red Plume safely deposited his passenger in the wood among the startled but pleased females, and near the soundly sleeping Pipkins; and with an additional word of cheer, he bade them good-by, and swiftly vanished in the gloom.

The Indian that had fallen beneath the hand of Red Plume furnished an additional rifle, so that all were now armed. Muggins was not the best of support in such a crisis as this; but, as he was removed from all fear of his spouse, there was a good prospect of turning him to some account.

In the increasing darkness, it was impossible to see across the lake. As the readiest means of reaching their destination, the four men entered the canoe, which

was pressed down to its very gunwales, and under the skillful propulsion of Red Plume, they sped with far greater swiftness than they could had they proceeded through the woods.

They had gone the greater part of the journey, when some alarm was caused by hearing the Sioux signalling to each other. The Indian stopped paddling and listened.

They were low, tremulous whistles, that had a wonderful distinctness in this still summer night, and most of them came from the wood near the house, although several showed that some of the redskins were at quite a distance in another quarter.

"I wonder whether that concerns *us*?" remarked Captain Swarthausen in an undertone, looking inquiringly toward Jud.

"Can't say; I'll ask Red Plume."

The savage shook his head to signify that it had no reference to them, and resumed his paddle.

Almost immediately the canoe slid softly to the shore, within a dozen feet of where the other two boats lay, and the four men stepped softly out.

"Here we are to stay," said Jud, by way of explanation, "till Red Plume comes back agin."

"But suppose he doesn't come back?" inquired the captain.

"In that case he will send me word."

"Send you word?" repeated Muggins, in amaze-

ment; "how in the name of creation will he do that?"

"Just as you heard them redskins do a few minutes ago."

"Ah, I understand."

CHAPTER VII

TREACHERY

FIELDING the Friend, when he discovered that both Red Plume and Jud, the hunter, were in his immediate neighborhood, became so interested in watching and speculating upon their movements, that he forgot wholly the suspicions that had been renewed in his breast regarding the fealty of Lige and for the time the negro passed from his mind altogether.

The only one who kept the suspected party in mind was Mrs. Prescott. More than once she softly stole to the door of the room; but, after she had done this several times, and detected nothing suspicious, her misgivings fled, and she ceased her visits almost entirely or made them much more rarely. She concluded, too, that Fielding would take all necessary precautions, and that it was all important that she should not neglect her duty as sentinel.

And thus it came to pass that Lige was left to himself for the greater part of the time. The cunning African heard the cat-like step of Mrs. Prescott, although the good lady could not have believed it, and he knew well enough the art of dissembling.

In the heart of this evil negro rankled the most vin-

dictive feelings toward the persons whose safety he held in his hands. The Quaker had detected him in stealing, and had spoken honest words of reproof; Mr. Prescott, when provoked, had punished him severely, and the fellow's bosom was filled with intense resentment toward him and all his family.

Lige was looking for Jarrik. Between this merciless Sioux and the treacherous African a sort of understanding existed, and both were working for the same end.

When he felt secure from detection on the part of those in the rear, Lige leaned his head out the window, looked carefully around, and waved his hand. Not a shot was fired, and he was convinced that the chief had not only seen him, but that he had understood him.

In the course of the next ten minutes the traitor saw something flit from one tree to another, and then discerned the tufted head of an Indian cautiously protruded to view. Lige shook his hand again, and the redskin darted to the tree nearest the house which offered any chance of screening his body.

For the space of fifteen minutes matters remained in *statu quo*. The Sioux manifestly was waiting until assured that the coast was clear.

Lige signalled to him several times, and finally he glided, with marvellous speed, across the clearing, and reached the shelter of the kitchen, without being seen by any of those upon the watch, excepting the traitor who was luring him onward.

It was necessary for the savage to ascend the side of the kitchen and come across the roof, before he could enter the room where the negro was impatiently awaiting him. The lower story was so secured that he could not force an instant entrance into it, and should he attempt to work his way, the noise would reach and alarm the ears of those within.

Here, therefore, he crouched, directly beneath the shelter of the shutter, waiting until assured that it was safe to clamber up the roof, and into the building.

Suddenly the trained ear of the chief heard a noise, as if the shutter were being cautiously unfastened. This was better still, as it would open the way for his brother warriors to swarm in after him.

Very softly and stealthily was the shutter dallied with, while the redskin fixed his eyes exultantly upon it, and waited for it to open.

The next moment it was shoved back, and he raised up and thrust his head and shoulders in preparatory to doing the same with his body.

“Much lub pale face ob night—”

At this interesting juncture, a kettle full of scalding water was dashed full in the face of the grinning redskin.

“Ain’t you ashamed yourself, you big nigger, tryin’ to steal in de house dat way. I’ll tech you how to ’buse my baby Cato.”

And the furious Dinah jerked the shutter to again, and fastened it in a twinkling, while Jarrik, “the noble

red man," leaped high in air, with a howl of agony, and plunged headlong for the lake, to check the intense pain that was driving him wild.

"Verily it would be doing an act of kindness to put thee out of thy misery," said Fielding, who witnessed the headlong flight, and understood what it meant. "And I will consult friend Prescott to see what he thinks."

But friend Prescott needed no consultation. He ran to the front of the house upon hearing the outcry, and as Jarrik plunged beneath the water, and came to the surface again, he offered such a tempting target that it was accepted, and when the Sioux sank beneath the water a second time, he remained there.

Baffled, chagrined and malignant, Lige knelt at the window, feeling that his revenge had only been postponed.

It was now quite dark. None of those within the building came near him, and he sat alone, looking for some further sign from his dusky allies.

He had not long to wait. A little more to the left, he dimly made out a form, stealing forward on his hands and knees, following almost in the footsteps of the destroyed chief. Glancing around to make sure that he was not observed, Lige leaned out of the window and beckoned to him to come on.

The savage made several signals with his hand, as he advanced, which gave the African great uneasiness, as he feared they would attract the attention of Field-

ing or Prescott. But all was still, and by-and-by he approached the kitchen so near that he was shut out from view.

The traitor now impatiently looked for his appearance upon the roof, but the minutes wore away, and nothing was seen of him.

It could not be supposed that he was about to commit the same blunder as his predecessor, and lay himself liable to the same fearful consequences.

Was he not rather waiting for the deeper gloom of the night? Or was he making ready to fire the building?

Perhaps—

But at this moment the form of the Indian suddenly rose over the eaves, and he crawled over the kitchen roof with the agility of a monkey.

The overjoyed negro raised high the sash, and stood back so as to give him free entrance. The next instant the redskin bounded through the window into the room.

If the treacherous negro had been infuriated at the mishap of Jarrik, who shall describe his sensations when, at this juncture, he recognized the Indian whom he had just admitted as no other than Red Plume, the chivalrous friend of the whites?

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONFERENCE

So overwhelming was the chagrin of the negro, Lige, when he found that he had admitted the Indian, Red Plume, that it was impossible for him to conceal his emotions.

“Whar de debbil you come from?” he asked, standing motionless, and staring at the Sioux.

“Hooh! much glad to see you,” returned the latter, who, it may be conjectured, had some suspicion of the predicament of the African.

“I didn’t know it was *you*,” muttered the latter, to himself, but in words that were understood by the iron-limbed Indian. For one moment the latter stared fixedly at the negro, and there was a dangerous gleam in his eye, as he rested his hand upon the handle of his knife.

In that one moment Red Plume was debating whether to bury his knife to the haft in the dark, treacherous bosom before him, or to wait a little longer. Only for a second did the mental struggle last. Well would it have been had the first thought of the Indian been acted upon then and there, and the negro been

cast out of this life into the other, even had it been without a second's warning!

But the grasp of Red Plume loosened upon his weapon, and without a word of explanation, he strode out of the room into the apartment where Mr. and Mrs. Prescott were impatiently awaiting him.

Fielding, as the night closed in, and the partial moonlight illuminated the lake and wood, had detected the stealthy approach of Red Plume, who established his identity by means of signals, so that the young Quaker instantly announced the fact to his friends, and thus secured his immunity against injury from those within.

With the cunning, characteristic of his people, the Sioux effectually concealed his individuality from the savages around him, so that his unchallenged approach to the beleaguered building can be readily understood.

Although aware that the friendly Sioux was in the building, yet Fielding deemed it unsafe to leave his station; so he gave that privilege to the parents, while in the silence of the building he was able to overhear everything that passed between the parties.

"Oh, Red Plume!" exclaimed Mrs. Prescott, rushing forward, and grasping one of his hands in both of hers, "tell me where are Lillian and Edith? Are they safe? Are they alive?"

"Dey alive."

"Have the Indians got them?"

"No—they hid in woods."

"Oh, thank God!" ejaculated the happy mother, sinking upon her knees in her gratitude to Heaven.

"They are safe! they are safe!"

Mr. Prescott stood trembling like a leaf; for a moment he was unable to speak, from his efforts to repress his excitement.

"Tell me all about it, Red Plume."

"They went down ribber in boat—me find 'em—hid in woods—Sioux can't find—wait dere till me come—or till Sioux go away—den come in house agin."

"You cannot understand what a load you have lifted from my heart," responded the father, taking the hand of the Indian, and pressing it.

The dim light of a kerosene lamp, turned down, was burning in the room, so that the three could easily distinguish each other.

"I suppose Pipkins is there?"

"Yes, dey take care ob *him*," replied the Sioux, who, we have reason to suspect, was not without a slight tinge of waggishness in his disposition.

"And where is Captain Swarthausen?"

"He out dere—wait fur me—he wid old Jud."

"Old Jud!" exclaimed the delighted Mr. Prescott. "And is he with you? We have more friends than we imagined."

"Hello, up dar!" called out Dinah, who, from the bototm of the stairs had been listening to the conversation, "whar am my baby? Whar Cato?"

"Dunno," was the reply of Red Plume; "no seen him."

“Wal, Red Plume, if you want me to be your friend, you jist find dat baby, and brought him in. If he’s been runnin’ into trouble hisself, I’ll gib him de biggest spankin’ dat he eber have—but Lor’-a-massy! de way I lub dat little feller am orful! Don’t forgit to brought him in.”

And with this parting admonition, Dinah went away from the foot of the stairs to resume her guardianship of the lower story of the building.

Mrs. Prescott, the mother, had heard that her children were safe; that was enough. She asked no more. All thought of her present danger sank out of sight in the remembrance of that blissful truth.

Red Plume passed to the upper room, followed by Prescott, where Fielding was awaiting him.

“I am right glad to meet thee,” quietly but cordially remarked the Friend, as he shook the hand of their dusky visitor.

Red Plume was an Indian, with an Indian’s shrewdness, and it was plain from his manner that he held the quiet Quaker in profound respect, if not friendship. He answered all his questions, and succeeded, in his characteristic way, in imparting all the information at his disposal, regarding their friends upon the outside, and their expectations of rescuing those within.

There were two probabilities regarding this assault of the Sioux—the first of which was almost too good to come to pass. That was, that being discouraged by the vigorous resistance with which they had been met,

they would withdraw and steal away during the night.

Their backwardness in making any determined attack on the building, gave some slight probability to this; but Red Plume had no belief in it. On the contrary, he knew enough of his race to understand that, having lost several of their warriors, they were not likely to depart until this account was made even by the death of an equal number of their enemies.

He did not deem it at all unlikely that runners had already been despatched for additional help, and that the morrow's sun might shine upon a hundred yelling miscreants all clamorous for the lives of the innocent ones within and without the building.

Red Plume, therefore, advised that they should keep up an unremitting watch, and resist to the utmost every attempt of the Sioux to gain the least advantage. If they should make an assault there was a prospect of creating a diversion; and if it was found that the building could not be saved, the flight would be attempted under cover of this in the rear.

There would be great peril in such an effort, but there was no choice between it and death, and there was hope, that under the confusion and turmoil of an unexpected assault of the whites upon the Sioux, it would be possible to hurry the inmates into the boats, and shove off into the lake before their escape could be frustrated.

Red Plume showed his good sense by examining the interior of the house from top to bottom. He had

been within before, and had a general idea of the arrangement of the rooms; but in a crisis like this, he could not be master of the situation, without an unmistakable acquaintance with the entire structure of the building.

Prescott, with lamp in hand, led him on this search, and the black eyes of the Sioux took in every weak and strong point, as one would have viewed a panorama passing before his eyes.

When the survey was completed the friendly Indian gave his views in the single comment:

“ Much fear fire! look out barn! ”

A sort of understanding was arrived at between the friends without and within, so as to enable them to communicate with each other and then Red Plume made ready for return.

This was hardly less difficult than his approach, as there was no knowing but that the Sioux had penetrated the ruse, in which case they would riddle him the moment he showed himself.

Nothing was said of Lige, although there can be no question but that he was in the mind of every one; but Red Plume managed to slip out of the window without the negro knowing what was going on, and then slunk around, so as to be out of the range of his rifle.

He stole along with the stealth of a panther, conscious that the eyes of more than one red Indian were fixed upon him, and when he had reached a proper

point, he started with the speed of the wind toward the wood.

Crack—whizz went the rifle of Fielding, pointed toward the swiftly-vanishing fugitive, who had little fear of being hit by *that* piece.

CHAPTER IX

AN INDIAN STRATAGEM

OUR duty as historian requires us now to bestow a little attention upon the more humble characters in this drama.

It may be truly said that Pomp and Cato were in the lowest depths of "black despair" when they found that Lige had escaped, and they had been peremptorily refused the only opportunity they saw of following suit. They had held strong hopes of being sent to Mr. Prescott as the bearer of some message, and it is easy enough to understand what the result would have been had the Sioux sent either or both of them upon such a duty.

They had their arms securely bound behind them, only their lower limbs being left free, while it was beyond all human possibility that either could get away without help from others.

At first sight it may seem strange that the Sioux should have preserved the lives of the two Africans, when it would have been such an easy matter to put them out of the way, and have done with them. This they undoubtedly would have done had not the leaders entertained hopes of turning the colored youths to ac-

count in the designs which they meditated against the settlers. More than one of these dusky strategists saw a probability of the buxom Africans being made to play quite a prominent part—one which they would find to be fun for their captors, but death to themselves.

So the poor fellows were cramped up together on the ground, while dark forms were silently passing back and forth and around them, and never once were they free from the scrutiny of more than one pair of basilisk eyes.

They could only conjecture what the occasional firing of a gun and the whoop of the Indians meant; but when Jarrik, the chief, received the sousing from Dinah, and ran howling to the lake, where he was put out of his agony by the merciful bullet of Mr. Prescott, there was great excitement created among the Sioux.

Had not their chief received his quietus at the instant he did, there would have been a rush and an assault for the purpose of rescue; and there can be little doubt of the result, at a time when there had been no communication, and consequently no understanding between the besieged within and their friends without.

“Gor a’mity, dis yer’s beginnin’ to wear onto me,” groaned Cato, just loud enough for his sable companion to hear. “I feels bad.”

“So does I,” wailed Pomp. “I don’t b’leve dem Injins likes us much.”

“O golly! I bet de ole woman’s mad,” added Cato, referring to his parent. “She don’t offen git mad, but

when she does, she makes de fur fly. Do you remember Pomp, last week when I fell in de lake and tored all de seat out ob my best pants. Well, dar! didn't she light on me? I haint 'zactly got ober de whalin' yet dat she gub me."

"Massa Fielding nebber git mad," said Pomp. "When we begun fixin' up our house, I built a fire outside to warm my hands and afore I knowed it, I had de ole new building burnt down. I 'spect Massa Fielding would tear round den, but he jist looked at it kind o' quiet like, wid one ob his grins, and den said, very soft like to me: 'Pomp, thee must be more keerful in handlin' fire!'"

"Do yer know what my ole woman would done, ef you had been me, and she had 'been Massa Fielding?"

"Ob course not."

"Why, she'd jist cotched me, by de nap ob de neck, and chucked me head ober heels into dat fire—dat's what she would."

"Hebens!" gasped the horrified Pomp, "I thought she lubbed you more dan dat."

"So she does, and dat's jist de reason she'd do it. Ef she didn't think nuffin' ob me, she wouldn't take no notice ob me."

"Den I'd rather she wouldn't lub me so much."

"Do yer know jist what I b'leve?" asked Cato, as if a sudden thought had struck him; his friend answered in the negative.

"Ef dey'd jist let de ole woman loose, an' I'd gib a

yell, she'd come tearin' out yer in a minute, an' wouldn't dese yer darkies run? I've a good notion to set up a screech for mammy, jist to see de fun."

"Better not," replied Pomp, who had not much faith in the proposed scheme. "Dey'll jist grab her afore she gits time to yawp."

This seemed so probable that the son concluded not to call upon his parent just yet, but he was one of those "spoiled children" who was sure to beseech the help of his mother, at the very moment, perhaps, when all under heaven depended upon his own exertions.

"I tell you what, I ain't goin' to stand dis!" exclaimed Cato, after some minutes had passed in silence.

"How yer gwine to help it?" was the pertinent inquiry of his companion in captivity.

"I'll tear round arter awhile, an' make 'em let me go."

There is no telling what these sable prisoners would have attempted had the chance been given them; but an unlooked-for occurrence took the expected opportunity from their hands.

When Red Plume made his flight from the beleaguered house, his identity was not suspected, even after he had entered the wood, and by a circuitous route hastily rejoined his friends.

It will be seen that this individual, on account of his race and tribe, enjoyed a vast advantage, which no skill upon the part of his friends could counterbalance.

A few minutes after his return, one of the hostile

Sioux approached the spot where the two negroes were sitting upon the ground, and roughly commanded Cato to get up.

“What yer want of me?” inquired the African, with no little trembling. “I’s jist as cumferable on the ground as a standin’ up.”

“Git up!” commanded the savage, kicking him violently.

“Wal, why don’t you ax a feller, as yer oughter?” was the sullen response, as the negro rose, sulkily, to his feet.

The moment he took the standing position, the Indian seized him, and drew him toward the clearing.

“Let go! you hurt! you’re a pinchin’ me.”

Here the object of the Indian speedily became manifest. He was about to make an attempt to approach the building, probably for the purpose of firing it; but, knowing how vigilantly it was watched, he hit upon the plan of using Cato as a shield.

Placing the African squarely in front of him, he gave him to understand that if he struggled to free himself, he would bury his knife to the hilt in his body. At the same time he had liberty to shout to his utmost.

This was to make sure that the whites comprehended the manœuvre, for it was not to be supposed that they would kill the negro for the purpose of penetrating the motive power behind him, and yet they might do that same thing before they comprehended the ruse.

"Golly, won't I yell!" thought Cato, when he understood what they were driving at. "I bet I'll raise the ole woman, an' den I don't want 'em to shoot me."

Shortly after the thick, burly form of Cato moved cautiously out from the wood, propelled by the Sioux, who took care to shield himself behind his spacious form.

The negro walked slowly and heavily, afraid to struggle, but using his lungs with a power that was positively fearful.

"Mommy! dey got me! dey're shovin' me long! dar's an Injun pinchin' me! why don't you come out an' make 'em stop?"

This performance was witnessed by those within, and, as may be supposed, caused the greatest excitement. Mr. Prescott had his rifle to his shoulder, at the first appearance of the dark form on the edge of the clearing and his finger was already pressing the trigger, when Dinah screeched:

"Don't anybody shoot—dat's my baby!"

"Good heavens! you spoke just in time!" exclaimed Mr. Prescott as he lowered his piece, and shuddered to think how near he came to killing his own servant.

"Perchance thou mayest discover some portion of the heathen's body and perchance thou wouldst like to shoot," called out Fielding, as he descended from his position and joined those in the second story.

"I rather think I would," replied Prescott, eagerly looking for the coveted chance.

"I tell yer, don't yer shoot!" called out Dinah, in great excitement; "dat yer's my baby, and yer better not touch him."

"I think I can get a glimpse of the redskin's head, but there is too little light, and the risk is too great," replied Prescott, lowering his piece again.

"Can we not instruct thy servant what to do?" asked Fielding, plainly excited, although it did not show in his voice.

"If he only knew enough to turn his head, but he's too frightened to do anything, except to yell for his mother."

It so happened that Dinah had been among the first to understand the ruse, as she recognized the appeal of distress at once, and, as was natural, became fairly wild.

What child ever called to its mother in vain? What danger will not the parent, whether it be brute or human, undergo for its offspring? Who will stop to think of the consequences when the imploring arms of the helpless one are stretched toward us?

Remembering the doting affection of Dinah for her lubberly son, Fielding rushed to the lower story to prevent the apprehended catastrophe.

He was not a moment too soon. The colored lady was in the very act of unfastening the same shutter that had served her purpose so well once before, when the Friend was at her side and caught her arm.

"Thee must not do it!" he said, in a low, but unmistakably earnest voice.

"I tell yah to let go ob me!" screeched the negress, growing frantic at this interruption on the very threshold of her effort at rescue, and attempting to wrench herself free from the man.

But the latter held her with a grip of iron.

"Dinah, wilt thou not suffer thyself to be persuaded? Serious consequences will surely result from thy obstinacy—"

But at this juncture Cato's cries increased tenfold in volume and passionate intensity, and his mother became furious.

It was no time for argument; and, throwing his arms around the barrel-like form of the cook, he carried her, struggling, across the room and into the other apartment, where he drew the door to, fastened it, and then hastened to the shutter.

By this time Cato was within a hundred feet of the kitchen window, and his approach was viewed with an intensity of interest which it would be impossible to describe. Startled, and somewhat bewildered by the turmoil below, Mr. Prescott hastened to the assistance of Fielding, while his wife, with a rapidly throbbing heart, hurried to where Lige had been left alone and forgotten.

Just as she came in, the negro was in the act of raising his gun to his shoulder. She screamed.

"Don't, Lige! Don't! don't!"

"What's de matter?" he asked, somewhat sullenly, as he lowered his piece and turned impudently toward her.

"That's Cato out there."

"I know dat, I guess."

"Then what are you aiming your gun at?"

"At de redskin behind him."

"Don't do it. You will hit Cato."

"Don't you think I don't know nuffin?" he demanded, in the same insolent voice. "Dar's 'nough moon for me to see Cato and de Injun ahind him." And the negro again brought his rifle to his shoulder.

"Lige, you shall not!" exclaimed Mrs. Prescott, almost beside herself at the fellow's insolence, and seizing the gun-barrel in her hand, and turning it aside.

He muttered something, but did not dare openly resist her, although his nature was evil enough to have murdered her on the spot. They stood silent for a moment, when the attention of both was called to a scene of the most exciting character.

Cato had reached a point about twenty feet from the kitchen, when the Sioux behind him gave utterance to a frightful shriek, and, with a spasmodic struggle, fell over on his back, stone dead, his bronze skull bored through by the ball of a rifle whose spiteful crack was simultaneous with his death-cry.

So sudden was this that both Fielding and Prescott were certain that the fortunate shot had been fired by Lige, who instantly rose to the highest point in their

admiration and confidence, while the African was equally positive that the Sioux had received his quietus from those whom he hated so cordially, and who were in the room below.

A moment later Cato got an idea of what had happened, and realized that he was now standing between two fires; but whether to retreat or advance was the all-important question, which he probably never would have been able to decide, had not his mother burst into the room again, and shouted to him to come at once to her.

There was no mistaking that command, and the obedient boy came plunging toward the window, the shutter of which was opened to receive him, while the bullets of the Sioux began whistling all about them.

The moment he was within reach he was seized by the muscular arm of his mother, and, without help of his own, drawn headlong into the room, where she began at once to cuff and box him most unmercifully.

"I'll larn ye how to stand thar and never mind yer poor old mammy! You're such a wicked heathen of a baby that you'll never live to grow up! Take that, and that!"

CHAPTER X

IN THE WOOD

SAFELY removed from these scenes of peril were the two sisters, Edith and Lillian, with Mrs. Muggins and Augustus Pipkins, to whom, in their state of anxious suspense, the time passed with unutterable dreariness.

All excepting the young gentleman from Chicago, who, placing his hat between his knees, had lain his head back against a large tree, and was "dreaming the happy hours away."

The coming of Mrs. Muggins was a relief to the girls, who felt the need of one of their own sex, as well as pleasure at the proof that another of their friends was placed beyond the great danger that menaced the rest.

"Isn't this orful!" exclaimed Captain Swarthausen's housekeeper. Just as like as not when we wake up in the morning we will all be dead!"

"Not so bad as that, aunty, I hope," said Edith. "Our friends are safe, and Heaven will not forsake them in the hour of their extremity."

"My gracious! what's that?" exclaimed the old lady, startled by the stertorous breathing of Pipkins, whom as yet she had not observed. Just enough moon-

light made its way through the interstices of the trees to reveal the form of the unconscious young gentleman. "I declare if there ain't that city chap out here, when he ought to be with the rest of them, helping to fight the infarnel Injians."

"Tut, tut, aunty! He isn't accustomed to this part of the world, and he could not be of any assistance to them. At least, neither Jud nor Red Plume care about having him with them."

"It don't make no difference," continued the strong-minded female. "All the greater shame for him. Do you s'pose I'd let my husband sit here, while the Injians was a-tryin' for to kill me?"

"There, never mind," added Edith, in her mild way. "It is not worth while to discuss the point. There can be no good come from it, and it does not please me to hear you talk thus."

This was quite a palpable hint, and even the somewhat naturally obtuse Mrs. Muggins "took" it.

Pipkins, therefore, slept on without any further derogatory remarks upon his rather heavy breathing.

At this juncture, however, the high pitch to which Mrs. Muggins' voice had attained produced its effect upon the delicate tympanum of Pipkins, and he awoke, staring around in the gloom, and, for a moment, not understanding where he was.

"O-ah!" he muttered, rubbing his eyes. "It looks as if I were out on a picnic, and they had forgot me;

or—no, it can't be that I'm *tight*—and it kind of looks that way, too. ”

To test the matter, he rose to his feet, and was much gratified to find that his head was level.

“ That settles *that* point, ” he added to himself. “ But it ain't clear yet, and I'm afraid I shall have to get some one to introduce me to myself. Hello! ”

It had all flashed upon him in an instant, and peering around in the gloom, he caught sight of his cousins.

“ That was decidedly good! Ha! ha! ” he laughed. “ I really forgot where I was for the time. But hello! I think I see another lady with you. ”

“ It's *me*, ” was the sharp, shrill exclamation of Mrs. Muggins, as she straightened herself up with the suddenness of a Jack-in-the-Box.

“ What the deuce are you doing here? ” inquired Pipkins, who never held any particular like for the virago.

“ I'm come here to take care of *you*; that's what I came for. ”

“ Your husband sent you, I s'pose, ” added the exquisite, significantly.

“ I go where I please, without his sending me, ” was the spiteful reply. “ Why ain't you with the *men*, a-helping of them to shoot these orful Injians— ”

“ Mrs. Muggins— ”

“ Instead of being here— ”

“ Mrs. Muggins— ”

“ Well, what is it? ” she asked, stopping short.

“How is your health?”

“Oh, *you!*” she fairly ground beneath her teeth, unable to do justice to her feelings; and then she began launching her invectives, when Edith interfered, and ordered her, peremptorily, to stop. She had lost all patience at the tongue-lashings of the housekeeper, and told her that she must either cease, or go away where they would not be disturbed by her.

There was a quiet dignity about Edith Prescott which was impressive. It was the triumph of a refined mind over a gross one. Mrs. Muggins held the young lady in no little fear, and she did not hesitate a moment to obey her. Instant silence fell upon all, broken by Lillian, who said to her cousin:

“Dolph, ain’t you afraid of catching cold?”

“Well, yes; I ain’t used to sleeping in the woods, and I’m apprehensive I’ll have some trouble before getting broke in. If I only had a light for my meerschaum it wouldn’t be so dem’d rough.”

“Never mind about your pipe; we have got to remain here all night, and you can get along without smoking as well as we can.”

“P’raps I could, if I hadn’t learned it when I was young—”

“Sh!” interrupted Lillian; “I hear something!”

Silence fell upon all, and, while listening, they distinctly heard a rippling on the edge of the river, evidently caused by the motion of a paddle.

“Good!” exclaimed Pipkins, in an undertone;

“that’s old Jud or Red Plume, come back to keep us company.”

“Perhaps it is not,” said Edith, who could not understand why either of their friends should return at this time, when she had reason to believe that they were on the other side of the lake.

“Yes, it is!” said the delighted Pipkins, starting in the direction of the sound.

The young lady would have added a word of warning, but he was immediately beyond the sound of her cautious undertone.

The sound which had caught their attention was so slight that the young man was compelled to stop every moment or so to listen. Thus guided, he made his way to the edge of the water, where he caught sight of a canoe with a single occupant. A moment’s scrutiny was necessary before he could make out that it was an Indian in the boat.

“Hallo, Red Plume! I’m deuced glad to see you, for it’s getting to be the greatest bore—”

But it wasn’t Red Plume!

CHAPTER XI

A HEROINE

AUGUSTUS PIPKINS dashed headlong back to where his terrified cousins awaited him.

"It isn't Red Plume! it's another Indian! and he's going to kill us all!"

It would be difficult to describe the confusion that followed. Mrs. Muggins began her unearthly screaming; Lillian, with a gasp of terror, started to flee, when her arm was caught and held by Edith.

"Wait, sister; you know I have a weapon."

Cowering like the wounded bird, she shrank against her sister as if there was safety in her presence.

"Thunderation! I'm going to climb a tree!" muttered Pipkins, who threw his arms around a small sapling, and was up among the branches in a twinkling.

It was the fact that the Indian was a hostile Sioux, who, however, was coming up the river, without any thought of there being any one concealed near the shore, and he would have passed in ignorance had he not been arrested by the sounds of words which reached his ears.

He was a painted fiend, fully fitted to be the compan-

ion of the merciless devils on the other side of the lake, and who instantly checked his boat at the prospect of getting the blood of some innocent victims.

He started hastily after the fleeing Pipkins, and would have overhauled him very speedily had he not been checked by his own habits of precaution. Not knowing who composed the party of fugitives, he made a brief reconnoissance to be certain of the danger he had to encounter.

When this reconnoissance was finished, Pipkins was perched in the tree, Mrs. Muggins had partly ceased her screeching, and Edith and Lillian were standing, silent and waiting.

Had it been during the day, an observer would have noticed that the elder sister held her hand in her bosom, in a manner which showed that it was not the emotion of fear alone which actuated her.

She gazed fixedly in the direction of the expected savage, and with her left arm thrown protectingly around Lillian, she awaited his approach with the calmness of a marble statue.

The truth was that that delicate right hand was resting upon the handle of a small, beautiful single-barrelled pistol—a present from Fielding, who, perhaps, thought it was as appropriate for her to carry as for him to own.

But a few minutes passed when the savage strode forward and looked about him. Whether he had seen

Pipkins ascend the tree or not can only be imagined, but certain it is he looked up and raised his gun.

“Blazes! don’t shoot!” called out the terrified man. “I’ll come down and surrender.”

With which he slid as nimbly down the tree as if it had been oiled expressly for that purpose.

The savage evidently intended his demonstration as a summons to surrender, for he lowered his piece. But the evil dog meant mischief. As he turned his head, Edith saw the glitter of his eye, and she knew that there was murder in it.

As the party stood, Mrs. Muggins was within an arm’s length of the redskin, while the sisters were somewhat to the left and double the distance away, while Pipkins was almost behind him, endeavoring to edge around so as to interpose a tree between him and his dreaded enemy.

Mrs. Muggins had become silent, and for a moment not a word was uttered by a single member of this singular group. But the housekeeper could contain herself no longer.

“You’ll get it, you bad, good-for-nothing dog! I’ll let you know we have friends—”

Poor woman! they were the last words she ever uttered. At that instant there was a lightning-like movement of the Indian’s arms as he threw his body slightly forward, and Edith caught the flash of the knife-blade as it was sheathed to the hilt in the bosom of the

woman, who sank down and expired without another word.

This wanton murder roused the whole devil in the Sioux's nature, and with a slight whoop he swung the reeking knife overhead and made toward the two girls.

In the indistinct gloom of the wood the redskin looked like a demon of the darkness as Edith saw him striding toward her.

Lillian's head was buried in the dress of her sister, and she saw nothing and knew nothing of the frightful scene that had just been enacted.

Never a limb moved Edith Prescott, except to draw her hand from her bosom and raise her right arm.

The muzzle of the pistol almost touched the forehead of the Indian, when the trigger was pulled, and the tiny bullet went clear and clean through his brain, and, with a spasmodic upthrowing of the arms, he fell over dead.

It was done almost in the twinkling of an eye. The discharge of the pistol followed close upon the knife-thrust, and the murderer and his victim lay side by side.

The sisters were safe, and so was their cousin, but poor Mrs. Muggins was dead at their very feet.

It was several moments before Pipkins got the truth through his head. He knew that Edith owned a pistol, but he had no suspicion that she had it with her, and it was his supposition that the shot had been fired by the Indian himself.

But as he saw the two sisters still standing, while the

dark form of the Sioux was stretched before them, he began to suspect that there had been a mistake made somewhere.

“I say—say—Edith, who fired that pistol? Was it you, now? Where’s that Indian? Is he dead?”

“He is dead, and so is Mrs. Muggins!” replied the girl, her feelings giving way now that the danger had passed, while she covered her face.

“I see she has left this world of sorrow,” said the unfeeling Pipkins, “that is, she has shuffled off the mortal bucket—no, I mean has kicked the coil—hang it, my Shakespeare has got a little mixed.”

For the first time Lillian uncovered her face and looked about her.

It is a singular thing this human nature of ours! Who shall explain its contradictions and inconsistencies?

The stern, dignified, magnificent Edith Prescott was now shuddering and sobbing in her sorrow; the petite, “airy, fairy Lillian,” was without a tear or a tremor.

It was almost as if they had changed their natures for the time. Leaving the side of her sister, Lillian walked to the prostrate form of Mrs. Muggins, stooped down, and placed her hand upon the face.

It was still warm, and a thrill of hope went over her at the thought that, perhaps, she was living; she forgetting, in the terrible shock of woe, that the body had not yet been given time to lose its vital heat.

Then she called her by name and raised her head, and

receiving no reply, she attempted to place her hand upon her heart.

As she did so, she touched the awful wound from which the life-blood was silently flowing.

She realized the truth, and with a faint exclamation of horror she sank back, fainting, upon the earth.

“Now, this is what I call confounded rough!” muttered Pipkins, who was hardly equal to the scene. “If things keep on in this way, we’ll all go to the demnition bow-wows. Come, Lillian, don’t faint—try and make a man of yourself; and, Edith, hangnation! what’s the use? Look at *me*! I’m just as good as ever I was. I ain’t afraid of anything. Do try and act like sensible men.”

The great grief of Edith was only temporary in its manifestation. By a powerful effort she subdued her feelings, and became herself again—calm, serene, and self-possessed. Kneeling down beside Lillian, she soothed her with a few gentle words, and the two arose to their feet, prepared for any duty that might appear to open before them.

“What shall we do?” asked Edith, directing her questions to Pipkins, who had moved as far away from the dead bodies as possible, without going out of sight of his cousins.

“Let’s go to Chicago; there ain’t any Indians there.”

“We must leave this place; I cannot stay in sight of *that*,” she said, pointing with a shudder toward the dark form of the body of the savage.

"It is a deuced unpleasant sight, and I would be satisfied never to look upon the noble red man again, as long as I live."

"Yet we cannot leave *her* here."

"How are we going to help it? Do you expect I'm going to tote her round on my back? I rather guess I ain't. What good will it do? Ain't the poor thing as well off here as anywhere else? and," he added, in a voice which was heard by no one but himself, "ain't her husband better off than he ever was?"

"It seems cruel to leave her alone in the woods," said Edith, looking mournfully downward, "but we can indeed do nothing; we cannot bury her, nor can we take her with us."

"My views exactly," Pipkins hastened to say. "Leave her here until matters are settled. The men can come here and put her under ground after all the folks have been killed—there—there—I didn't mean that; don't go to whimpering, Lillian, at every mistake a fellow makes. I meant to say, that after the Indians had all been driven away from the other side the lake, and everything has settled down serene like, why we can all gather here and give the late Mrs. Muggins a first-class burial—that's what I was driving at."

"But where shall we go? If we wander off too far, they will not be able to find us, and Red Plume told us not to leave this place."

"He didn't think you were going to shoot one of these interlopers, in aboriginal shape," replied Pipkins,

who seemed to be totally wanting in his sense of the "fitness of things," and who, as we have shown, could be light and frivolous at the most solemn times.

"If you have any special admiration for a Sioux in a state of suspended animation, Edith, we'll camp around this specimen; but the only thing I admire about him is his blanket, which I will confiscate."

As the Indian had fallen, his robe was mostly under him. Pipkins, however, did not hesitate to draw it from beneath him, with such abrupt violence, that the body turned almost entirely over.

"There!" exclaimed the exquisite, stepping to Lillian, and throwing it upon her shoulders, "that will help protect you from the night dew."

Had a rattlesnake dropped upon her shoulders, the girl could not have started with a more convulsive horror, than when she felt the loathsome garment descend and clasp her.

Flinging it to the ground, she sprang away from it, as if it were a deadly peril. Her cousin coolly picked it up.

"Will you take it, Edith?"

"No; I would perish first."

"All right," replied Pipkins, as he folded it about him, and strutted back and forth, "I find it very comfortable. You know that I dress rather—that is, rather *well*—and this will help protect my clothing. But we must proceed to business. The question is, whether we

are to stay here or somewhere else until morning. I believe we all favor moving away."

"That is true," replied Edith, "but I meant that we should go a short distance; that is, so as to be beyond all sight of what is here, but not to desert our friend."

"Yes; let us go," added Lillian—"but we have no boat."

"The Indian has left his canoe on the bank."

"We don't want any," said Edith; "we will go only a short distance, and that by land."

The three moved cautiously forward, the man at the head treading with something of the air of a conqueror.

In fact, Augustus Pipkins never experienced a greater sense of his importance, (which is saying a great deal,) than he did, when acting as guide to his cousins.

"Sh! not too fast!" he whispered, turning about, and making a warning gesticulation. "We ain't out of danger yet."

"Have you heard anything?" asked Edith, shrinking back.

"There was a slight rustling, that sounded to me like the tread of an Indian's moccasin, but I ain't sure."

Edith Prescott hastily stepped to him and whispered:

"Don't go any further in that direction, until you ascertain."

"Stay here till I reconnoitre, then."

The ladies stood motionless, while Pipkins began

stealing forward, with no more expectation of encountering an enemy, than he had of meeting his employer in Chicago.

The fugitives had started directly toward the river, and the young man was now but a short distance from it.

But he had gone but a few feet further, when a shiver of terror ran over him, as he heard an unmistakable movement in the bushes directly before him.

"Jingo! and I ain't got anything but my pipe," thought he, as he paused, undecided whether to retreat or to stand a moment longer until satisfied of the nature of the danger.

He listened with a throbbing heart, but all the sound that reached him was the dull report of a rifle, which came faintly across the lake, and told of the situation of their friends.

"I don't hear anything, and, maybe, I was mistaken. Good heavens!"

At that instant a dark body came suddenly and almost noiselessly out of the water, and in a prone position rapidly approached him. Pipkins turned to flee, but in his haste, fell headlong to the ground, and ere he could rise, there was a rushing sound, and the creature, whatever it was, had vanished.

"Jingo! what was it?" he asked, rising on his hands and knees, and staring about him.

"Some wild animal," replied Lillian, laughing outright, at the ridiculous figure her cousin cut, and for-

getting for the moment the fearful peril which impended over all.

“ I think it was a bear,” added Edith.

“ Didn’t I frighten him, though? I never saw an animal run like that ! ”

“ Which was frightened the most, you or he? ” asked Lillian, endeavoring to suppress her laughter.

“ Me! What’s the matter with me? ” demanded the irate Pipkins, rising to his feet. “ That’s the way to scare a bear; haven’t you ever heard, that if you get down on all fours, any wild animal will run, because he don’t understand to what species you belong? Having no gun to shoot him with, that was my plan of action. I say, Edith, you had better reload that pistol of yours.”

“ I have nothing with which to reload it,” she replied.

While they continued speaking, Pipkins was searching up and down the bank for the Indian canoe. He had little difficulty in finding it, and called the attention of his cousins to it.

At this instant, Edith caught the arm of her sister and drew her back.

“ There is another enemy,” she whispered.

“ No; he is a *friend*,” replied Lillian, who spake from the *heart*.

CHAPTER XII

COMPANIONS DU VOYAGE

HERE our pen must linger a few moments, while we turn aside to record an incident which, in its results, has an intimate connection with the closing events of this history.

On this same eventful afternoon, a small canoe was making its way up Crescent River, toward Manyo-han, or Sleeping Water. In it were seated two men, a Caucasian and American, the latter of whom was using his paddle with all the skill and power characteristic of his people. He was a diminutive, weazen-faced, dried-up Indian, known as the Otter, and for a dozen years past had served as a runner between the different frontier posts, having during that time done good service for General Harney, and other commanders in the West.

At present he was stationed at Fort Grandon, a post something less than fifty miles distant from the scene of the incidents we have narrated, and he was now engaged in rowing Colonel George Havens up Crescent River to his uncle's, Captain Swarthausen's, where he was to make a call and then return to the fort and take charge of the forces there during the temporary absence of the General, who was the commandant.

But Colonel Havens had two days yet before he was to assume his new duties, that is, two days from the morning of the one upon which he left Fort Grandon. He calculated it would take the better part of a day to reach his uncle's, and something less to return, so that, if no accident occurred, he would be able to spend several hours with Captain Swarthausen, and get back all in good time.

We have spoken of his proposed visit to the Captain's. This was his nominal errand, and yet, it may as well be confessed at this point, that on the shore of the beautiful Sleeping Water was a far more powerful attraction, it being understood at the same time that the young officer was not lacking, in the slightest degree, in his affection toward the one who had been such an indulgent friend to him.

But "airy, fair Lilian"—this Rose in the Solitude—this Flower of the Wood, this personification of rippling laughter, of sparkling eyes, of pearly teeth, of merry light-heartedness, of sunshiny hair, of the very grace of movement and poetry of motion, with her *pé-tite* form of matchless symmetry, whose "light foot shone like jewel set in a dark crag," and whose voice floated over Manyo-han, like the trilling notes of fairy music—this was the one who, months before had won the heart of the handsome young officer, who had liberally feed the Otter to get hence to the lake, without a moment's unnecessary delay?

The Colonel reclined in the stern of the canoe,

quietly smoking his Havana, while the iron skin kept the light structure skimming like a leaf up the river.

With every mile they advanced, it seemed as if his heart throbbed faster and faster, for was he not approaching closer to the one who had scarcely been absent from his sleeping or waking thoughts during the last six months?

Had he not heard that sweet laughter in the midst of battle, above the scream of shell, the thunder of cannon, and the shrieks of the wounded and dying? Had not that spirit-like form floated in the sulphurous clouds above him, even in the din of the fight?—had it not beckoned to him in the cold moonlit sky, when on the silent march?—and now when the “fates of war” had carried him so close to the reality herself, he was not the one to turn his back upon his own good fortune.

And so he lay back in the boat, and indulged in those dreams so blissful to the young lover, in which hope built her fairy castles, and the future was robed in all the roseate hues that heart could sigh for.

“I am soon to see her,” he muttered to himself, smiling at the thought, while his heart gave an additional throb. “She does not expect me, but she will be none the less pleased for all that.”

And then the Colonel pictured their last interview—the moonlit sail across the lake. Fielding, the young Friend, handsome, gallant and modest, was kind enough to attend to the sail and rudder, although he

THE RED PLUME

aterial assistance from Edith, who sat beside him, and seemed not at all displeased that the narrowness of the boat compelled them to keep so very close to each other.

But he and Lilian were in the bow, and the broad sail, intervening between them and those in the stern, made them as much alone as if they were in the solitude of the desert.

And sitting there, he held the delicate white hand in his own, and, after a vast deal of manœuvring, succeeded in drawing the golden curls against his breast, where he resolutely held them, looking down upon the angel-like face, and wishing in his heart that the moonlight voyage might continue forever.

Colonel Havens, as a matter of course, had heard of the outbreak of the Sioux in Minnesota, and the Otter had given some intimations of the settlers in the vicinity of Sleeping Water Lake being exposed to danger, but he had not reflected seriously upon it, and it did not now disturb his meditations of the happiness that was so near at hand.

The afternoon gradually wore away, and still the arms of the Indian worked with the untiring steadiness of a steam-engine, and, lulled by the soft motion of the boat and his own soothing meditations, the young officer gradually sank into a drowsy sleep, from which he was aroused by the sudden stopping of the boat.

“What is the matter?” he asked, starting up and looking about him.

The Indian made no reply, but motioned to him to remain silent. They had reached a narrow portion of the river, deeply shaded with woods upon one side, while a level plain on the left stretched up the stream for a fourth of a mile, where the forest was resumed, making each bank of the stream dark with the luxuriant foliage.

Havens knew that something was wrong, and he stared in every direction and listened acutely; but, as he neither saw nor heard anything unusual, he asked, rather impatiently,

“What’s up, Otter?”

“See, there,” replied the redskin, pointing up stream, toward the beginning of the woods on the left.

The Colonel followed directions, but could detect nothing unusual. While he was looking, the Otter, who spoke English like a native, fixed his beadlike eyes upon him, and a peculiar smile added several additional wrinkles to his parchment-like face.

“You see nothing?” he asked a few moments later.

“Nothing but the prairie and the woods beyond.”

“Look sharp now.”

“I have done all I could.”

“Look above the trees.”

Ah! now he saw it. A thin, dark column of smoke rose perpendicularly upward like the faint outlines of some shaft of iron through the trees, and told of the unmistakable camp-fire beneath them.

“What of it?” he asked; “they are a party of redskins I suppose.”

“Yes; they are Sioux.”

“Are you afraid of them?”

“Yes, they kill all the white people; they would kill the Otter, too, for he is the friend of the white people.”

Colonel Havens sat bolt upright, and a chill of terror ran through him, as he recalled the accounts he had heard of the Sioux massacres; accounts, too, that he knew were based on truth.

“Good heavens! and what has become of *her*?” he exclaimed.

“Of whom?”

“Captain Swarthausen, and our friends who live along the lake.”

“They are in a bad place.”

“Then why do we tarry here? Let us hurry to their relief.”

The Otter dipped the paddle, and sent the canoe swiftly and silently up the stream, until he was close to the woods, and not far from the camp-fire.

“You stay here till I see who they are.”

With this the redskin stepped lightly out of the boat and disappeared in the wood, while his impatient companion had nothing to do but to await his return.

But scarcely ten minutes had passed, when there was heard the sharp crack of a rifle, followed by a frightful shriek, which he was certain came from the Otter, who must have been detected and shot, almost at the moment he came within sight of the camp-fire.

What to do the Colonel was unable to decide for some moments—whether to retreat, advance or remain where he was. Satisfied that he must now face the danger alone, he stealthily worked his way up stream, until he had gotten fairly beyond the neighborhood of the camp-fire, when he plied his paddle more vigorously, and thus it was that he glided by the shore where the fugitives were concealed just at the moment the sisters descried him.

CHAPTER XIII

LOVE AND JEALOUSY

THE recognition was mutual and simultaneous. Shying his canoe sharply against the bank, Colonel Havens sprang out, and warmly grasped the hands of the sisters, while it was only by a strong effort that he prevented himself from catching Lillian and pressing her to his heart.

“What does this mean?” he asked, in amazement.

Edith, in a few minutes, explained everything—how they came to be there, what had happened on the other side of the lake, and why they were waiting.

Havens was astounded.

“I never dreamed of such a thing; and so Mrs. Muggins is dead, poor soul! I will go across the lake to the assistance of our friends,” said he, making a movement toward the boat.

“No; you shall not,” exclaimed Lillian, stepping forward and laying hold upon his arm.

“If you could be of any assistance, we would tell you to go,” added Edith; “but Red Plume and Jud would be displeased to have you go there. If they could see you coming, they would send you back.”

Still the Colonel hesitated, his impulses drawing him

toward the scene of danger; but second thought convinced him that Edith had spoken the truth, and he gave over his intention of crossing the lake.

Several times Augustus Pipkins had coughed and cleared his throat, but in the excitement of the occasion he was not noticed, until Lillian suddenly recollected herself, and introduced the two gentlemen.

“Extremely happy to make your acquaintance, sir,” said the exquisite, raising his hat, and bowing in his most elaborate style.

The officer politely returned the salutation, but in that single second, when their hands touched, the sharpest pain of his life thrilled his soul—the poignant pang of jealousy, that goes through the heart like the thrust of the Italian’s stiletto.

Why was this popinjay here? What if he was the cousin of Lillian? Did that give him the right to play the gallant to her? The marriage of cousins was not so unfrequent an occurrence as to make it at all improbable that these two were betrothed. Indeed, the probability was that they bore such a relation to each other.

It is singular how much a jealous man can think of in a very few minutes. Colonel Havens did not remember that either of the sisters had ever mentioned the name of their cousin, in his presence, until now.

Why this reticence? Why this studied silence regarding him? Did it not point to the dreadful fact of their engagement?

Such were the questions which seethed through the

brain of the lover, and his own answers to which almost maddened him into turning around and going down the river without exchanging another word with any of them.

But enough sense remained to prevent this consummation of rudeness.

"You were approaching the river when I came up," said he; "why was that?"

"We cannot remain in this place, with its dreadful associations," replied Edith. "We were going to move only a short distance."

"I see you have a boat; why not go with me to Fort Grandon, where you will be safe?"

"That's sensible," exclaimed Pipkins; "I second that motion. Let us once get into Fort Grandon, and then they can't hurt us, even if they do kill all on the other side of the lake."

"You may go, cousin; but Lillian and I will remain here."

"And why will you stay here?" asked Havens.

"It would be a living death for us, so long as we knew nothing of *their* fate," she answered. "We promised Red Plume and Jud to await them here, and there may be a great deal of danger between here and Fort Grandon."

The Colonel recalled his experience in coming up the river, and he coincided with the speaker.

"You will remain with us?" she added, inquiringly.

"I must be at Fort Grandon to-morrow night, or

run the risk of being cashiered; but, if my presence will add any additional security to your situation, I will not hesitate a moment."

"The deuce of the matter is that my furlough will be up before I can get back to Chicago," said Pipkins, "and I shouldn't wonder if I got cashiered, too. That's why I'm rather anxious to be under way."

"You are welcome to go whenever you wish," said Edith, with quiet dignity. "We can very well spare you."

"Of course, I can't go unless you go with me, and I still hope you will change your mind."

"I may as well tell you that there *are* Indians down the river."

"Confound it! is that so? Then I guess we'd better wait," remarked Pipkins. "I say, if we are going to make a change of base, it is time we were at it."

"Suppose we go up the stream a little ways," said Colonel Havens; "you will then be nearer your friends, and more likely to see them when they come down stream."

This proposal was acted upon. Pipkins was somewhat amazed when Lillian took her seat in the Colonel's boat, but as it was too late to prevent it, he acquiesced, and assumed the lead with Edith in the stern of his canoe.

They moved only a hundred yards or so when they came to rest, where the overhanging limbs and undergrowth were, if possible, still more luxuriant.

When they had halted, a sort of couch was made for Edith in the bow of the boat, while Pipkins wrapped himself up in his great-coat, and speedily fell asleep in the stern.

As Havens noticed this arrangement of matters, he spoke to Lillian :

“ Have you any objection to remaining in the boat for awhile? ”

She consented rather reluctantly, as it struck him, and he dropped a little ways down stream, so as to be beyond ear-shot of those who were in the other boat. Fastening the prow of his canoe to a limb, he was then at liberty to say what he chose to the vision of loveliness beside him.

His first remark was very characteristic of a lover.

“ This is the time I have longed for, for many a month, and the hours will now fly on golden wings.”

“ I am sorry you cannot remain longer,” replied Lillian, who was thinking of father and mother on the other side of the lake.

“ Had I dreamed of anything like this, I would have managed to have my leave of absence extended ; but as it is, I must leave at daylight at the latest, else I shall not make Fort Grandon in time.”

“ But you said there was danger on the way.”

“ There seems to be danger everywhere, as much in one place as another. It even found you out in your hiding-place.”

“ It was my cousin’s fault. I do not think we shall

be disturbed again, but you probably will in going back."

"If I came safe, is there not reason to hope that I will be equally fortunate in returning?"

He had not told her of the death of the Otter, else she would never have assented to his going back alone, even though he incurred the risk of being dismissed the service.

She was oppressed with sadness, and as the sense of danger draws kindred hearts nearer together, they seemed attracted toward each other, and again Havens felt the delight of holding that sunshiny head upon his shoulder.

It was indeed a pure happiness for which he was willing to brave ten-fold the danger he had encountered, and which really imperilled his remembrance of the time when his furlough expired.

For some moments they sat in silence, she enfolded in his strong arm, and the hearts of both overflowing. Then he felt a tear drop upon his hand, and he asked, in the softest of voices:

"What is it that troubles you, Lillian?"

"Father and mother—shall I ever see them again?"

"Let us hope for the best. If you wish it I will go out upon the lake. Shall I?"

She instantly nodded her head in the affirmative—a reply which somewhat surprised him, and he repeated it.

“Let us go part way—near enough to learn what has become of them.”

The next instant the fastening of the canoe was loosened, and it began moving slowly up the river.

It was Haven's wish to pass their friends without attracting their attention, but the vigilance of Edith prevented. Although her companion was sound asleep, she was not; and, as they came opposite, she inquired where they were going.

“We shall not be gone long,” replied Lillian, evading a direct reply. “Wait here for us.”

Edith added a word or two, which were not intelligible—so the lovers passed on, and soon were beyond sight and hearing.

Colonel Havens handled his paddle very gently, and it was with some trepidation that he found himself entering the lake, on the banks of which such stirring scenes were enacting at that very moment.

They had gone scarcely a hundred feet, when Lillian gasped, with a shudder of terror:

“Look! look!”

That which had arrested her attention was the sight of a burning house directly before them.

Havens paused and looked fixedly at it, while he felt the canoe tremble from the agonizing sobs of Lillian.

Scanning it carefully for a moment, he quickly turned his head.

“It is not your house, dearest; it is Fielding's.”

Inexpressibly relieved, but still doubting, she looked up.

“Are you sure?”

“I suspected it from the first, but I did not mention it until I felt certain I would raise no false hope. Don’t you see that your house lies off here, and Fielding’s is more to the right?” he asked, pointing away in the darkness.

A closer examination confirmed the truth of the colonel’s remarks, and, as may be supposed, lifted a heavy burden from the heart of both.

“But if they can burn one, they can burn the other,” she added, after the fire had begun to die away.

“Perhaps they can, but it looks to me as if Fielding’s house was not defended at all. I listened, and heard no sound of firing; did you?”

She was obliged to say that she had not.

“Then the only wonder is that it did not go before. When they come to make kindling-wood of the other, that will be a different thing; they will find several in their path who will have something to say about the matter.”

“But how can father and mother get away?” asked the daughter, who had racked her brain for hour after hour in attempting to answer the question herself. “If they are besieged there, who but God can relieve them?”

“More unlikely things than that have been done. When I heard that Red Plume and old Jubal Judkins

were mixed up in this business, I felt more hope than I did before. That Red Plume, especially, is one of the sharpest redskins that ever lived. You ought to have heard some of the stories of his exploits that the Otter told me in coming up the river."

"Did you have a companion?"

"Part way," replied the Colonel, somewhat embarrassed; "but he left me a number of miles down the river."

There was the ever present sense of danger, so long as they remained so far out on the lake, and Havens almost unconsciously worked his boat back toward the head of the river from which it had issued.

"All in the gay and golden weather
Two fair travelers, maid and man
Sailed in a birchen boat together,
And sailed the way that the river ran;
And they were lovers, and well content,
Sailing the way the river went."

Lilian was silent and thoughtful. Her fears were for those on the other shore, while he who held the paddle could think of scarcely anything but her.

There is a witching power in the moonlight, and it throws its magic veil over the homely as well as the lovely, softening down each roughness, and making all beautiful.

And there was just enough of the silvery, gossamer light to give a spiritual loveliness to Lillian Prescott such as had only visited her lover in his dreams of the angels.



They had scarcely gone a hundred feet when Lillian gasped,
“ Look ! look ! ”--P. 92.

He looked down upon the snowy forehead and face, with the beautifully pencilled eyebrows, and delicate nose, and perfectly cut features, the small, symmetrical form, and, like a true admirer, wondered why the whole world did not hasten to Sleeping Water to pay adoration at her feet.

“Ah! if *I* can but claim this fair one,” he reflected, “then shall such happiness be mine as all will envy.”

But the same old Shadow again hovered over him. Was Lillian as trustful and loving as she should be?

Was not this quiescent languor born of indifference toward him, as well as of anxiety about her parents?

True, she could not but feel the keenest anguish for those who were in such frightful peril, but she ought to have had a single thought at least for him at her side, who was never tired of gazing in her face, of listening to her words, and obeying her slightest command.

The most ardent love is the most selfish, and the torment of jealousy is the keenest in that heart which is affectionate above all others.

Colonel Havens fought the phantom like a hero, but it would not down. He endeavored to thrust it behind him, but the hated figure of the Chicago exquisite constantly hovered before his eyes.

He was a cousin of the family (so ran his meditations), and, consequently, had visited them before, and frequently. He and Lillian had known each other for years, and, unless he was welcome and well-treated, he

would not be likely to remain so long a time in such an out-of-the-way place in Minnesota.

The lover strove his best to keep away the frightful conclusion, but it came like the thunderbolt of the quivering lightning. She and this insufferable Augustus Pipkins were betrothed lovers!

Yes: the more he thought of it, the more convinced of its truth did he become. He reasoned that any man who could dress well, look feminine, and talk vapid nonsense was certainly the most popular with the other sex; and, consequently, he who could lay claim to neither of these attainments had no hope when brought in contrast with him.

“Why did I leave Fort Grandon?” was the next question which he asked himself, in his bitterness of spirit; “why did I come here to have my feelings lacerated in this manner? Fool that I was to suffer my love to go out to any one of her kind!”

Everything that came to his mind only confirmed his bitter suspicions. The fact of Pipkins remaining so contentedly with Edith showed that he was so certain of Lillian that he was willing to trust her with any one.

Would he not have done the same thing if he had been given the promise of Lillian's hand? Certainly any man would not fail to show that confidence in the woman of his choice.

He was certain, too, that when she stepped in his boat, it was done with a hesitating reluctance, which proved that her heart went in the other. Did he not

recollect the painful throb his own heart gave as the suspicion crossed his mind?

“Straws show the way the wind blows,” especially in love, and Colonel Havens felt that, if there was any reason for a person in the world to feel utterly miserable, he had it. It was the contrast with his former happiness and exultation of feeling that made him so completely wretched.

A lover whose sensibilities are warped by jealousy is not apt to be considerate in his words, nor is it likely that they will be understood by the one to whom they are addressed.

“Lillian,” said he, as he again dipped the paddle into the water, and moved slightly away from her, “you said this Mr. Pipkins is a cousin of yours?”

“Yes.”

Even that monosyllable “touched” the lover; why couldn’t she use an additional word or two?

“His home is in Chicago.”

“Yes.”

“What attraction can *he* find in this part of the world?”

“That is a singular question, and I might ask it, *with more propriety*, of you.”

“I might have known it,” thought the half-demented lover. “Instead of placing me on an equality with him, she puts him first.”

“Of course,” he said aloud, “he would naturally be attracted toward his cousins, and would be glad to

make them an occasional visit; but it seems to me he has a very lenient employer to allow him to spend so much of his time away from his business."

"So he has," replied Lillian, as she leaned over the canoe and plashed the cool water with her hand,

"And he must find a *special attraction* here," he added, as if he would probe his own wound to the bottom.

"Perhaps he does," was the same indifferent reply; so indifferent indeed that it almost maddened the colonel.

The truth of it was that Lillian saw he was foolishly jealous, and she was willing to allow him to feel so. She was somewhat provoked that he should appear so forgetful of their surroundings, so regardless of the frightful peril that hung over all, as to show that he was thinking only of himself and his admiration of her.

Besides she possessed the trait which seems to be the inevitable characteristic of the gentler sex—the disposition to coquette with a man, to make light of his love, and carefully to conceal her own.

She understood what the matter was, and she had no inclination to clear away the clouds, as she could have done in an instant by a word.

"What is his full name?"

"Augustus Adolphus Pipkins."

The Colonel laughed somewhat scornfully.

"Phœbus! what a name."

"Don't you like it?"

"It is splendid—magnificent."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, looking up in the most artless manner.

"I never heard its equal."

"I am glad to hear you say so; some persons think it is not a good name, but I cannot see why."

"I suppose he is good company."

"Indeed he is; we have had many a pleasant sail on the lake, and I do not see how we could get along without Cousin Dolph."

"That's what I thought," added Havens to himself, but loud enough to be heard by his companion.

"You seem to be interested in our cousin," continued Lillian, looking up again in the face of her lover.

"I was not aware of any special interest."

"Then why so many questions about him?"

"Simply because I had nothing better of which to speak."

"Oh! that's it! He has been here several weeks, but is now anxious to get back to his home again."

"Yes, I saw that he was; such persons generally are eager to leave when any danger appears."

"If I am not mistaken Colonel Havens expects to be at Fort Grandon to-morrow evening."

How that cut! the young man flushed, and barely checked the hot reply that came to his lips.

"I have professed a willingness to stay, but I am bound by the honor of a soldier to return."

"Dolph promised to be in Chicago at an earlier date.

than he now can possibly reach there. Should any one wonder, then, at his anxiety to fulfill his promise? ”

“ I see you are his champion,” said Havens, impatiently. “ I wonder whether you would defend *me* so violently.”

“ I do not know of any one who would attack you so fiercely, in your absence.”

Thus it was; every reply of that golden-haired little beauty was like a Spanish dagger, sharp and keen, piercing to the very heart.

“ I have said nothing of your magnificent cousin which I would not say gladly to his face.”

“ Then why not wait until you have the opportunity? ”

“ I do not care enough about him to meddle in his affairs.”

Lillian laughed softly.

“ How strange! when he seems to have occupied your thoughts to the exclusion of everything else, ever since we have been on the lake.”

“ Indeed,” exclaimed the lover, in a voice which was meant to be of a polar frigidity.

“ How strange! If we are to judge of one’s thoughts by his words, you surely will not deny that my handsome cousin has occupied a large share of your thoughts during the last half hour.”

“ I am sure not so much of mine as of yours.”

“ Perhaps you are right,” she replied, in her indifferent manner, as she leaned over the boat, and dallied with her hand in the water.

“ I am sure of it,” added Havens, compressing his lips to keep back his feelings.

“ I will not dispute you.”

For the time the girl had forgotten the shadow upon her heart. Now that her mind had been withdrawn from the appalling gloom which enfolded her so long, it was curious that it kept itself away so long.

“ This man loves me,” she reflected, as she leaned silently over the side of the boat. “ He is brave, and noble, and manly, but he is jealous, and he has no reason to be so, for he is the superior of my cousin in every respect. He is handsomer, too, yet he is jealous all the same. It will not hurt him if I give him an additional pang or two.”

And so the wilful beauty said nothing, nor did she look at her companion, who toyed with the paddle and kept the boat gliding slowly and quietly down the river.

As for Colonel Havens, he had succeeded in making himself the most miserable of men; he even believed that he could look upon the girl before him with indifference. If she preferred such a man as her cousin, he was very certain that he should not object, nor would he care. The world was large, and there was a path of glory already opening before him.

There is a love of independence which is natural to the human heart. If crushed, it seeks to rise—if rebuffed, it resents it; and so this lover was longing to be at Fort Grandon, to place himself at the head of his

men, and lead them to victory that should crown them all with glory.

Lillian noticed that the canoe was now moving quite rapidly, and she looked up in the face of her companion; but he avoided her gaze, and applied his paddle with more vigor than ever.

“You seem to be in a hurry,” she said, as they began gliding down the river.

“So I am.”

Her heart misgave her. Perhaps she had trifled too long with him; she had misjudged his sensitive nature.

More than once she was half persuaded to apologize for her cutting words, and confess that he stood first and foremost in her affection; but pride, so frequently the barrier to duty, stood in the way, and her lips were dumb.

And all this time the light canoe was carried by oar and current down stream, until they reached the place where the other boat was lying.

Pipkins, as a matter of course, was asleep, but there was some natural surprise felt upon the part of the Colonel, when, as he glided close to the boat, he saw that Edith was unconscious.

Propelling his canoe close to the other, he brought it to rest, and silently waited for Lillian to leave.

Proud as ever, she stepped softly over, and stood in the centre of the other boat.

“Good-by,” said the colonel, in a low tone, as he dipped his paddle in the current, and glided away.

“Good-by,” she replied, inclining her head, but maintaining her standing position in the boat.

At every stroke of the paddle the heart of Colonel Havens sank deeper and deeper, until it seemed as though his strength were about to desert him entirely.

But he resolutely refused to halt or turn back, unless she relented.

Hark! was not his name spoken.

He paused and listened. All was still—could he be certain that she really had called to him, he would have turned about and bidden her good-by once again—such a good-by as his heart prompted him to give.

But he could not be certain, and he would have died rather than commit such a blunder. So he held his paddle suspended and listened; but, if his name had been called, it was not repeated, and saddened almost to despair he resumed his oar, and turned his face resolutely toward Fort Grandon.

Lillian Prescott had stood and watched the vanishing canoe with emotions scarcely different from those of him who sat in it. Her heart reproved her for what she had done, and crushing down her pride, she called in a voice which sounded to her like that of another person.

“*George!*”

He did not look back, and she did not notice the cessation of his paddle.

“He is too proud,” she reflected; “he heard me; but he spurns me, and it may be I deserve it—”

The tears came in her eyes, and when they cleared, the canoe was gone.

When fairly beyond sight of her who had made him the happiest and most wretched of men, Colonel Havens bent to his paddle with renewed energy, and sent the light vessel skimming like a water fowl down the river.

He could only conjecture as to the time, but he was certain it was far beyond midnight, and he had no right to loiter on the way.

There was danger ahead, but he cared nothing. In his present mood, he would as lief plunge among a horde of yelling Sioux as to continue his monotonous journey without encountering any peril.

But hard work is a good thing to cool the brain, and as he placed mile after mile behind him, he began to think more sensibly of what had occurred during his visit to Sleeping Water Lake.

"I was hasty," he said aloud, as he allowed the boat to float awhile with the current, "but her words cut me to the quick. She has wounded my feelings, and I hope hers have been touched; but how different from when I ascended the stream!"

The thought of the joyous expectancy with which he had driven the canoe up current, and the gloomy despondency with which he returned, brought more than one heavy sigh from him.

He could not withdraw his thoughts until he discovered that he was in the vicinity of the place where

his comrade, the Otter, had been shot. Here considerations of personal safety changed his meditations for the time.

By this time it was broad daylight, and there was the greater need of caution.

He kept close to the shore, moving with the greatest stealth and silence, and frequently listening for sounds of danger.

He was proceeding in this manner, when a rustling in the bushes overhead startled him, and he looked up just in time to see a dark body drop lightly in the boat directly in front of him.

Catching up his gun he was about to fire, when he lowered his piece with the exclamation:

“Heaven save me! it is the Otter!”

“Sh! there is danger!”

And the weazen-faced redskin picked up the paddle, and began working the boat himself.

With his care and skill, he soon got it safely past this perilous neighborhood, and then with his wrinkly smile, he explained matters.

“Hadn’t left you but a minute,” he began, in his rapid way, “when I scented a camp-fire, and climbed a tree. Hadn’t been there only a few seconds, when half-a-dozen of the Sioux came right under the tree—looked up and saw me—fired—didn’t hit me—but I dodged and yelled, and made them believe they did—fell to the ground—didn’t know me—took me for a white man at first, and then begun to ask my name—one of them

knowed me—were going to kill me—but I palavered with them—made some of them believe I was going to help join them in this massacre—they gave me a show—I got a chance—slipped away—knew you would be back by morning—climbed this tree—dropped into the boat—so, that’s all.”

The same day, the two reached Fort Grandon, where we must leave them for the present, and give our attention to more stirring incidents.

When certain that her lover was gone, and that he would not return to them, Lillian Prescott sat down in the canoe beside her sister, discovering for the first time that she was wide awake.

“Let me wrap my shawl about you,” said Edith; “it will protect you from the night air.”

Clasped in each other’s embrace, the two reclined in the stern of the boat, which, with its unusual weight, sank almost to the gunwales.

Edith was quiet, and Lillian supposed she was asleep; but she was mistaken. Although the elder sister had said nothing, yet her woman’s instinct told her all. She knew that Lillian, nestling close at her side, was weeping with a combined grief, such as her heart had never known before, and she gently, but more lovingly, drew the dear one to her heart.

But no sleep was to visit their eyes that night.

Edith was beginning to relapse into drowsiness, when she felt her arm grasped with startling force, and

rising suddenly bolt upright, she pointed toward the lake, and fairly gasped :

“ *Look!* ”

A bright star-like point of light could be seen gleaming like a point of fire across the lake. The intervening undergrowth partly obscured it, but it speedily increased in size, until a broad glare of fire was reflected against the sky.

“ The Indians have fired the house,” added Lillian, in the same terrified whisper.

“ Perhaps, it is the house of Fielding? ”

“ No; that burned when we were out on the lake. Captain Swarthaussen’s has gone too, and they have attacked ours. Hark! what is that? ”

“ It is the sound of guns.”

“ And they are shooting them.”

“ It may be our friends who are firing,” responded Edith, who, at the same time was far from feeling the hope with which she endeavored to inspire her sister.

Indeed she was sure that the long dreaded crisis had come at last!

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRUGGLE IN THE LAKE

RED PLUME had been not the least interested spectator of the stratagem of the Sioux, who had used Cato as a shield in approaching the house.

From his position he calmly watched the movement until it became manifest that there was no one in the building that dare fire, when he picked off the redskin himself.

In the bedlam that was then raging all round, not a member of the Sioux party detected, or even suspected, that the fatal shot came from outside the building. They looked upon the exploit as another evidence of the "eternal vigilance" of those within, and took the greater care to keep themselves beyond their range.

Old Jud, Captain Swarthausen and Muggins were under the dense shrubbery along the lake, to the west of the Prescott cottage. From this point they were watching, with lynx eyes, the proceedings, and waiting for the moment to mingle in the fray.

At present it was the part of prudence for both the men to remain invisible, as a glimpse at either would be enough for the Indians to detect them, and the old hunter saw no prospect of his doing any good.

As the shouts and whoops of the Sioux reached his ears, his eye sparkled, and a grim smile illuminated his face.

“ I’ve fought them varmints before, and have raised the h’ar of more than one of ’em in my time; and the way things look just now, I shouldn’t wonder if there was a little more of that business done atwixt now and morning.”

“ This ain’t the kind of fighting I am used to,” replied Captain Swarthausen, “ although I did some of it in my younger days, when I was stationed on the frontier. I have no objection to standing up before a civilized foe and blazing away at each other; but may the devil take such a style of war as this.”

“ I don’t see the sense of fighting anyway,” observed Muggins, who seemed to think it his duty to enlighten the others. “ If everybody in the world was like me and Fielding there wouldn’t be any such thing as war or massacres.”

“ Just there’s the trouble, Snoopy. The world, as a general thing, happens to be different; and we have to take it as we find it.”

“ I s’pose so,” was the philosophic assent of the corpulent gentleman, who had not a very clear meaning of what was said.

The conversation ran along in this desultory manner for some fifteen minutes longer, but it was noticeable that Jud took no part in it. The reason for his silence was that something had attracted his attention, a short

distance away, and its character gave him no little uneasiness.

It was while looking toward the house that his keen eye detected a flash of water, such as is made by the leaping of a fish. It was on the other side of the clearing, which extended from the lake down to the house, and at a corresponding distance with his own.

He narrowly watched the place while the pointless conversation at his side was going on, and, as he anticipated, soon saw the dark form of a canoe put out from the shore and start directly across the lake.

"That's the game, is it?" he muttered, and then spoke to his companions.

"I've got to leave you a while. Thar's a redskin going across the lake, and I must foller and see what he is after."

He cautioned his friends to remain where they were until Red Plume gave them different orders, and then stealthily crept to where the canoe of his Indian friend was lying.

By this time he could only catch the faintest outlines of the swiftly vanishing boat of his enemy, but he cared nothing for this, as he knew well enough the direction it was pursuing.

Instead of following in a direct line after it he turned to the right and coasted along the lake until certain he was beyond all likelihood of being detected, when he dipped his paddle deep and sent his frail boat skimming like a bird over the water.

Propelled with the skill and power he possessed, it was not long before he struck the opposite side, at the beginning of Crescent River. Here he backed his boat under the shore, and waited the coming of the other.

Old Jud was morally certain that he was considerably in advance of his enemy, but he was somewhat disquieted by the fact that he could hear nothing of him. On such a still night, when they were removed from the turmoil and tumult upon the other shore, the slightest sound could be heard a great distance.

He leaned his head over and held it close to the water, and still hearing nothing, he lowered his ear until it was beneath the surface, but still nought reached him upon which he could hang the least probability of the coming of his foe.

This satisfied him that at that moment there was no canoe beside his own anywhere in the vicinity. Whether the redskin whom he had seen put out from the other bank had detected his danger and turned back, or whether he had already landed at some other point, was more than he could determine.

His great fear was that the savage had eluded him by touching shore and pursuing his journey on foot. This was a possibility, but it was not a probability; and the more he reflected upon it the more satisfied did he become that the Indian was aiming for the mouth of the river, with the intention of taking advantage of its swift current and its general course.

Still, as moment after moment passed away, he al-

most unconsciously toyed with his paddle in the water, propelling his boat slowly forward, as though he were impatient to meet his expected foe.

In this manner, and almost without knowing it, he had advanced out upon the lake until he caught the outlines of the island, which, as will be remembered, stood very near the centre.

Not a little surprised to discover what he had done, he abruptly halted. At this juncture a slight but familiar sound struck his ear, and with a powerful sweep he shot his boat backward, with the intention of driving it out of sight.

But he was too late. At that moment the dark figure of a canoe shot to view from behind the island, and only the suddenly reversed movement of the hunter prevented a collision between the two boats.

The Indian who occupied the smaller canoe was a cowardly dog, who was probably more noted for his fleetness as a runner than anything else. Almost any of his race would have advanced instantly to the attack, when confronted by a single foe, and engaged him in mortal hand-to-hand combat.

But such a thought did not seem to enter the head of the Sioux for a single instant, and he abruptly started to retreat, heading toward the shore which he had left but a few minutes before, while Jud followed hard after.

It would have been an easy thing for the hunter to have ended the matter with his rifle, but he wished to

keep what now seemed likely to take place from the main body of Indians, and just then the stillness which had settled upon lake and wood made the firing of a gun fatal to his purpose.

Scarce a score of feet were necessary for the fleeing Indian to discover that he was overmatched in the race, and his white foe was overhauling him very speedily. Seeing that there was no hope in this course, the savage suddenly plunged overboard, going like a loon far under the water.

"You won't get away from me in *that* style," muttered Jud, who was terribly in earnest, and resolved on using up this redskin.

With paddle poised in hand, he awaited the rising of the bronzed head, which came to the surface a short distance away, when he shot toward it.

There was a curious sense of honor about Jud Judkins which prevented him ending this contest, as he might easily have done, within the next dozen seconds; but it seemed so unfair to him to remain in the boat while his antagonist was in the water, that he made a leap toward him, and thus placed themselves upon an equal footing—if such a term can be used where neither of them had any footing at all.

But the dusky dog had no wish to encounter, even under these parallel circumstances, the terrible Jud, of whom he had probably heard before, and the minute the hunter was within striking distance, he sank out of sight.

Jud, with his knife between his teeth, dived after him, missed him, came up first, and calmly awaited his reappearance; but second after second passed away, and he saw nothing of him. He glanced in every direction, so as to make sure of not losing him in the semi-darkness, but nothing was to be seen of him.

“He’s gone under for good,” he thought; “so blamed skeart that he daren’t come up again.”

To make sure he swam slowly around in a small circle, but with no better result than before.

There lay the two canoes from which the occupants had leaped, silent and motionless. The faint moonlight reflected from the water, gave the hunter quite an extended field of vision.

The keenness with which he scanned the whole area of the circle that bounded his vision, made it impossible for a fish to come to the surface without being discovered. Jud was satisfied that the Sioux, although a skillful swimmer, could not have gone, at the utmost, more than fifty feet under the water, while the radius of his vision was more than double that.

What other possible solution of his continued disappearance than that he had been drowned?

The island was a hundred yards off, so that the Sioux could have taken no advantage of its proximity, and it was physically impossible for any living creature to remain under the water, without breathing, for the several minutes that had already elapsed since the submergence of the redskin.

The action of this fellow in leaving the main body of the Indians, and heading across the lake toward the river, satisfied Jud that he was a messenger who had been despatched to some point to procure help in the reduction of the house and the destruction of the inmates. If, therefore, he could be cut off, without the knowledge of those who sent him, it will be seen that a vast deal of good might be done, and it was not at all unlikely that, could it be accomplished without the discovery upon the part of the others, the lives of the entire party of whites might be saved by it.

This will explain the caution and determination with which the hunter undertook the business.

“Never mind—he is gone, and it amounts to the same thing,” he muttered, as he swam leisurely toward his boat. “They’ll have to send another messenger, afore they’ll get any more of the skunks out here.”

He rested some minutes, listening for sounds from the scenes of the recent conflicts; but the silence still continued. During the single dive that he made, Edith Prescott had fired her pistol, and “killed her man,” so that the report had not reached him, and he had no suspicion of what had happened *there* during the last half hour.

Perhaps five minutes had passed, when Jud dipped his paddle in the water and started toward shore. At this instant he observed that the other canoe was gone!

“By the living jingo!” he exclaimed, with one of his quiet laughs, “that was a powerful smart trick!”

So it was. The Indian, when he made his last dive, had gone under his own canoe, and came up on the other side of it. While Jud was looking wonderingly around for him, he was working his own boat toward shore, so slowly that it was unperceived even by the sharp-eyed hunter; and when the latter, with his face turned partly from him, sat listening, he improved his opportunity to the utmost, and succeeded in a very brief time in putting himself beyond all danger.

CHAPTER XV

THE TORCH

WHILE Jud Judkins was engaged with the Sioux upon the lake (and so cleverly outwitted, as we have shown), a scarcely less interesting encounter had taken place upon the land, with the prospect of producing far more serious results.

After the hasty admission of the negro Cato into the councils of the besieged, there was comparative quiet for some time. The Sioux had received indisputable demonstration of the fierceness of resistance they had to encounter, and they held off until they could devise some less dangerous means of bringing the whites to submission.

It was about this time that the messenger was sent across the lake, for the purpose of procuring reinforcements, and was compelled to turn back by the hunter Jud. The truth of the matter was that the Indians had been so weakened by their losses that they saw their purposes could scarcely be accomplished except by additional help, or by springing some unexpected and unprepared-for scheme upon them.

They had already suffered so severely at their hands that they were incited by the basest of passions—re-

venge; and there was no mercy to be expected if any of the whites should fall into their power.

The great ally upon which the Indians counted was *fire*, and it was this that our friends feared more than anything else. Could the torch be applied to the building, and the flames get fairly started, it would burn like touch-wood, and the death struggle would be precipitated upon them.

The barn was in dangerous proximity, and there was no possibility of preventing this from being fired, and both Prescott and Fielding wondered that this natural recourse had been left so long.

But the Sioux had sufficient reasons for their forbearance. In the first place, the night was so calm that it was only a possibility of the flames reaching the house, while the broad glare would be likely to expose some of them to the unerring rifles of those within.

There were several shadowy forms flitting in and out the barn constantly, only waiting until the springing up of a breeze, or until orders were given to apply the torch. The horses had already been removed, and there was almost a quarrel over the division of the plunder.

Among the shadowy figures that were sometimes within the barn, was Red Plume, who, in this manner, kept himself informed of the movements of his enemies.

The incipient wrangle which began, on account of the rival claimants of different parties to the horses

broke out again, and became serious, three separate warriors mingling in it and drawing their knives.

It would have been a good thing for the whites could this have continued until it came to blows, as every injury inflicted by the Sioux upon each other was precisely so much gain to our friends.

Unfortunately, however, the man who succeeded Jarrik, as leader, was equal to the occasion. Seeing that his followers were becoming too much incensed to listen to reason, he seized one of the horses by the head, cut its throat, and then sent a bullet through the brain of the other, settling the dispute, as did the captors of Miss MacCrea, a hundred years before.

There being nothing left for the redskins to dispute over, they naturally stopped disputing, and all became serene again. They accepted the situation, and were only the more eager to avenge themselves upon the innocent.

As the time passed, the vigilance of those within, if possible, increased. Mrs. Prescott and Cato took their position near Lige, who muttered that he did not need their presence, and seemed specially vengeful toward his sable companion.

Mrs. Prescott, however, would not allow the servant to depart, and so the three remained together. The husband was equally faithful in guarding another side of the house, while Dinah was omnipresent, and kept her kettle "boiling hot," ready and anxious to give

another bath to those who had so maltreated her "infant."

Fielding was a sort of general-in-chief. He had returned to his station in the third story, from which point he was unremitting in his vigilance. His principal aim was to detect and frustrate the strategic schemes of the redskins, and at the same time be on the lookout for any signals that his friends might make.

Great as was the peril that had hung over the party for the last few hours, the Friend had fired his gun but once, and that, as will be remembered, was aimed at no one, and only intended to assist Red Plume in his flight from the building. Up to this point, he felt that he had been a consistent Quaker, but there was no telling how long that pleasant feeling would continue.

The dim moonlight was just sufficient for the whites to detect any insidious approach of their foes. The house being surrounded by a clearing on every side, any savage was thus exposed to their bullets, and hence the necessity of the extremest caution in any attempt they might choose to make.

The danger incurred by the Sioux has been made clear to the reader. It was not only necessary to reach the building, but to remain there until preparations could be completed, and a fire kindled.

Once beside the house, the inmates could not fire down upon their assailants, but they had a potent ally in Dinah, who harbored her boiling water with an appreciative sense of its value, while the windows and

doors made it easy for them to open suddenly, do what shooting they chose, and close and secure them again before any harm would be likely to befall them.

All this was understood by no one better than the assailants themselves, whose tardiness in making any real courageous attack, is thus explained.

The vigilant Fielding was alone in the upper story, intently scanning the lake and clearing, watching and listening, when a slight noise on the roof, directly overhead caught his ear, and drew his attention in that direction.

There was a small trap-door here, secured from within, and barely sufficient to admit the passage of a moderately-sized man. The slight rustling, when it struck his ear, was immediately beside this, and he suspected at once that there was an Indian on the roof seeking to enter the building from that direction.

But how came he there? was the question which the Friend involuntarily asked himself.

That he had come up from the kitchen roof was his first supposition—but, when he came to reflect upon it, that seemed impossible in the face of those below. Then he reflected that he might have taken advantage of some adjoining tree; but this was still more improbable, as there was no tree near enough to make it possible, even for such a gymnast as Hanlon.

However, it was certain that some one was there, and it was no time for speculation or theorizing. If he was there, it was for no good.

The great apprehension of Fielding was, that he would set fire to the dry material of the roof, before he could be prevented.

Then came the hope that perhaps it was Jud or Red Plume; but "sober second thought" dissipated this last hope.

The treacherous savage could be heard slowly crawling along the roof as if he had not yet reached the point he was seeking, although, as we have stated, he was in the immediate proximity of the trap-door.

The latter was secured by an ordinary wooden button, but as the outer side offered no projection for seizing it, this was all-sufficient.

There was no light in Fielding's room, and taking one of the chairs, he placed it directly beneath the trap-door, and stood upon it, so that his head was brought directly beneath it, and he could hear distinctly any movement upon the outside.

Standing thus, he listened, but the slight disturbance had ceased. Satisfied, however, that only a few inches separated him from one of the "heathen," he became the more alarmed at the profound stillness.

Softly he turned the button, and then gently pressed upward, but the door did not move. He pushed with more force, but with no better result. Then he knew the reason why.

The Indian was upon it!

Fielding stepped down again, and picked up his gun. He was certain that the Sioux was crouching upon the

door, and he was none the less certain that the three-quarter inch pine board of which it was composed, could be perforated by the ball, as though it were card paper, and the Indian slain by the same missile with as much ease and certainty as if he stood clearly revealed before him.

He raised the hammer of his gun, but immediately lowered it again, and set the weapon back.

“It may be Red Plume; but, even if a heathen, I will not needlessly shed his blood.”

Once more he pressed against the door, and it yielded. The Indian had moved off it. Raising it scarcely an inch, he peered through the narrow opening, and his heart gave a leap as he saw a small star-like point of light, on the lower edge of the roof.

The Sioux had already set fire to the building!

As he gazed, the Friend caught the outlines of the Indian in a stooping position, and intently busy with his incendiary work. He had gathered together a little bunch of dry twigs, which he had probably brought with him, and by means of a common lucifer match, had ignited them.

The blaze as yet was but a mere point, and he was carefully nursing it by encircling it with the palms of his hands and gently blowing it.

It would have been the easiest matter in the world for Fielding to have thrust the muzzle of his gun out of the trap-door, and doubled up the redskin like a jack-knife. But he hesitated. So long as there was a

possibility of accomplishing his purpose in any other way, he was not willing to shed blood, and he thought he saw his way clear.

When the Quaker assumed the upright position upon the chair, his head and shoulders protruded through the uplifted door, and he quickly but silently laid it over upon the roof. At the same instant he leaped out as nimbly as a monkey, landing, in a stooping position, within twenty inches of the redskin.

The latter heard the rush and thud as he struck the roof, and leaving the blaze to itself, turned his head with the quickness of lightning.

Before the contracted pupil of his eye could accommodate itself to the gloom toward which it was turned, a clenched fist struck him in the face, very much after the manner of a sledge-hammer.

He threw out his arms and endeavored to clutch his assailant, but he was taken at too much disadvantage, and went off the roof backward.

"Go thy way in peace!" remarked Fielding, as he saw his heels disappear over the eaves.

And the Sioux obeyed him.

Subsequent discoveries led to the supposition that this Indian struck upon his head, and, as he fell quite a distance, he never rose again.

It was the work of a few seconds for Fielding to dash out the tiny blaze, which was just then beginning to eat into the roof. He then made a hasty survey, to be sure that the fire had been started nowhere else.

Finding nothing, he leisurely descended through the trap-door, and fastened it after him.

“Verily, the heathen are seeking to encompass our ruin,” was his truthful reflection as he quietly took his station and looked cautiously forth for signs either of his friends or enemies.

Fielding had acquitted himself brilliantly, beyond question; but when he had cooled down somewhat, and had time to reflect upon the extraordinary occurrence in which he had participated, he was made more uneasy and apprehensive by it than from anything that had happened since the beginning of the siege.

It was unaccountable to him how this Indian reached the highest portion of the roof without detection. He could not believe that it had been done through collusion with Lige, who, as he believed, had made such a splendid and timely shot an hour or so before, and besides, even if he was treacherous enough to do such a thing, he had companions with him who would detect the scheme the instant it was attempted.

The cause for alarm was the probability that the Indians had found some way of reaching the most vulnerable portion of the building, of which the inmates knew nothing, and which, if they should discover, they were unable to stop.

While the Quaker was thus reflecting, he observed a gradual lighting up of the lake in front of him. He found that his range of vision was becoming more and more extended, and but a few minutes passed when he

caught the faint outlines of the island far out in the lake.

At the same instant the glow was reflected against the sky with a peculiar redness which left no doubt in his mind as to what it meant.

A moment later, Cato came tearing up the stairs, fairly wild.

“O de gracious hebbin! Massa Fielding! what do you s’pose de darkies hab done? Dey’re set fire to your house, and it’s all burnin’ up! Golly, ain’t my old woman mad!”

“I thank thee, Cato, for the information, but I discovered it a few minutes ago. Do thou go below and assist thy kind mother in watching against the stealthy approach of the heathen.”

The negro stood for a moment staring in blank amazement at the dark form of the Quaker, just visible against the field of partial light behind him. Then he turned about and retraced his steps, muttering:

“I don’t b’lieve he’d get mad if somebody should set fire and burn him up.”

Cato carried the intelligence of his reception to his mother, who was indignant that the matter was taken so coolly by the one principally concerned.

“It’s jis’ like some folks!” she replied. “When you was out dar, singin’ out to me in your sweet voice to come and help you, he jus’ put his arms ’round me, give me a big hug, and wouldn’t let me go out to you. Wal, I’m sartin if *he* doesn’t care, *I* doesn’t!”

And with this philosophic conclusion she bustled around the room, and examined the water to see whether it was boiling.

“Dar ain’t any dat water to spare, and, Cato, you mustn’t get dry—”

“O mommy!” burst out the infant, “I know’d dar was sumfin’ I forgot! I’m jist as dry as a fish.”

The probabilities were that the boy would not have become sensible of his condition for a long time but for this reminder upon the part of his parent.

“Shet up!” said she, spitefully; “jis’ like you. Which would you ruther hev, one ob dem darkies crawl in de winder and kill us all, or go a little dry?”

But the spoiled child could not be reasoned out of his crying mood, and he knew he had but to persevere a few minutes longer to succeed. So it came about that a large portion of the hydrogen on hand went down the capacious throat of Cato, and the stock of water, as a consequence, was rendered much less, and all the more precious.

“Now, you go up stairs and help Lige watch,” said she. “You ain’t no good hyar, and de next thing will be you’ll ax for sumfin’ to eat.”

Thus reminded, the son all at once became ravenously hungry, and there was no quieting him until he had surrounded a fearful quantity of food.

Then, reflecting that there was nothing more that he was capable of doing for the benefit of his corporeal existence, he made his way to the second story, where

the other negro was alone at his station, Mrs. Prescott having rejoined her husband a few minutes previous.

Cato was in the best of humor, and slapping the other African on the shoulder, asked him, in the heartiest manner.

“How yer gettin’ ’long, Lige?”

The latter started, as if he had been detected in a guilty act, and turned savagely toward him.

“What yer hit me dat way fur? Don’t you know nuffin’?”

“’Course I does, I tinks I knows a good deal, and my mommy says I’m the smartest ’colored gentleman in Minnesota.”

“Your mommy is a big fool!”

“Better be keerful, Lige; dat’s dangerous to talk dat way.”

Lige looked at him in the most contemptuous disgust.

“Who ’s afeared ob you?”

“I didn’t mean *me*; I meant *mommy*. If she should hear you speak so unspectfully ob her she’d ’light onto you.”

“Oh, dat’s it! What you come up here fur?”

“To help you watch.”

And reminded of his duty by his own answer to the question, Cato leaned forward and took a stare out the window, and then stepped back again.

“Wall, you can jist go back, fur I don’t want yer.”

“Dat don’t make no difference: mommy told me to

come, and if I don't she'll make me. She don't keer fur you."

"You jist go back, and tell her I sent you."

"Git out! I ain't goin' to do no such a ting. You talk as though you was boss round dese parts."

If there was any one in the building who suspected the fealty of this evil fellow, Cato was certainly not among them. He had been associated with him for a considerable time and only knew him as a sullen, sulky negro, who often muttered threats against his employer, and, in fact, with all whom he came in contact.

But these, even when they came to the knowledge of Mr. Prescott, were looked upon as the harmless expressions of the chronic discontent of Lige, and were forgotten as soon as they were uttered.

Cato feared his mother more than he did Lige, although he had several bouts with the latter, who was was his master in every respect, and, if he chose, could have picked him up and cast him out the window.

But the infant had no fear of any such calamity befalling him. His mother was within "striking" distance, and he had a voice which, it has been shown, was all potent to bring her through any danger to his assistance.

So Cato backed up against the wall, and gradually slid down until he reached the floor, where he took an easy position, so as to do his duty as sentinel, with as little personal discomfort as possible.

“ When you see anything, Lige, jist let me know and I’ll git up and take a look. ”

“ Yas; you go to sleep, ” replied Lige, hoping to get rid of his companion through the aid of somnolence.

“ You needn’t think I’m goin’ to sleep, ” was the indignant retort of Cato, at this slur upon his vigilance. “ I kin keep awake as long as de next feller; longer too, if I want to.”

“ Who said you couldn’t, you big fool? But nobody wants you here, and if you’s agwine to stay, you kin jist as well shet yer eyes as open them.”

“ I tell you I ain’t sleepy—not a bit.”

Even while he spoke, the words of Cato became thick and heavy, and Lige knew well enough that he would be unconscious within the next ten minutes.

So he kept him mumbling and talking aimlessly, until, finally, he was overcome—his head drooped, and he knew no more of terrestrial things.

In the meantime, the conflagration of Fielding’s house went on without interruption. Once started, there were no means at hand to check it, and not one of the four men who were crouching outside entertained any thought of interfering with this work of the Sioux. When the latter had made sure that it was doomed, they set up a series of howls and whoops, which continued a few minutes, when they all departed:

Less than half an hour had passed, when old Jud

touched the arm of Captain Swarthausen, and pointed across the lake.

“That looks as though they hadn’t forgot you, Captain.”

“Thunderation!” muttered the latter, as the deep gloom at the point indicated was lit up by a rapidly increasing light, which soon revealed the house of the soldier enveloped in fire.

“Ain’t it lucky we left there when we did?” whispered Muggins, cuddling down as though fearful the blaze would reveal his hiding-place.

“I don’t know whether it is or not,” replied the Captain; “if we had staid there we might have prevented this.”

“No, you wouldn’t,” remarked Jud; “they’d burned that up, and all of you in it, if you hadn’t got up and got, jist at the time. Do you know what that is all done for?”

“I suppose because they wish to injure us all they can—I can see no other reason.”

“You haven’t got the idea, so I’ll give it to you. They’ve burned down the Quaker’s house, and there goes yours. The next will be the barn, and then everything will be ready to open on this house here.”

“I don’t understand what you mean.”

“You see they want to fix things, so if they do git the folks out, they’ll have a fair chance at ’em. They might manage to git into Fielding’s house, and if druv

out of there, might be able to reach yours; so as to save all that, they've burned 'em both down, and if they have to leave here, there won't be any other that can be turned to account. Do you see?"

"Yes; but they haven't burned the barn as yet."

"That'll go next, and then it'll begin to git hot around here."

"Yes," said Muggins, taking the hunter literally; "we'll have to crawl out into a cooler place, where the fire can't reach us."

"That won't be so easy," laughed Jud; "that'll be about time for us to take a hand in the business."

"Well, it may as well end one way or other. I only wish my nephew, George, could appear about this time, with a squad of Minnesota cavalry, that have been in this kind of work before. The greatest enjoyment for me, in this business of war, is to see a big body of the enemy, especially when they are such a set of devils as these, at the very moment when they are sure of success, pounced down upon by a lot of fellows, wild and furious as a tornado. I have helped in such matters many a time, and I tell you it is the keenest kind of fun, and makes an old soldier like me proud of my profession."

"I don't see much chance of that happening."

"No; George is not far away, but he is too far to be reached in time to help us."

"I am afraid so," added Captain Swarthausen;

“and if these reinforcements do not come to the Indians, I see no reason why we shouldn’t hold our own against them.”

“Nor I, either,” was the emphatic response of old Jud.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FLAMES

It seemed as if the Sioux were exhaustless in their schemes for reducing the besieged cottage without resorting to an open attack.

The house of Captain Swarthausen burned fiercely for a time, but it had hardly begun to die away, when Prescott, from his lookout, became aware of still another stratagem of their enemies.

On the edge of the clearing, at the point where both the negroes had first presented themselves, he detected a movement, which, for a time, he was unable to comprehend, but which he knew was another demonstration of the Indians.

What caught his eye, was a dark, irregular body, which it was impossible to identify so long as it remained in the gloom and shadow of the wood; but when shortly after it moved out into the clearing, he saw that it was a number of boards or planks, rudely fastened together, and intended, no doubt, to serve as a bullet-proof screen in their advance against the building.

Against this device it was impossible for the besieged to protect themselves. It was an easy matter for the

redskins to keep their persons hid, and so long as they did so, no bullet could reach them.

Here, then, was work for Red Plume and Jud. They alone could frustrate the plan, and, failing to do so, the most unfortunate results were sure to follow.

The Sioux penetrated the design, even before it was acted upon, and noiselessly making his way to where the three men were concealed, told them, in his broken English, that the time had come for them to go to the assistance of their friends.

“ I’d like to go very much,” said Muggins, “ if I can be of any help, but it seems to me—that is—that I had better wait here until everything is ready. Don’t you think so, Jud? ”

“ Oh! we don’t want you; you needn’t be so skeert.”

“ I ain’t frightened in the least. I am only speaking for the good of the whole company, you see.”

Captain Swarthausen supposed, as a matter of course, that he was to accompany the two, but when he crawled out and rose to his feet, the hunter gently shoved him back again.

“ We can do better without you, Captain; you’ll have to wait a little while for your turn.”

He stared a moment, as if he did not understand the meaning of this repulse; but, convinced that there was some work to do whose nature was too delicately dangerous for him, he merely bowed and sat down again.

The two scouts instantly separated, so as to approach the novel machine of war from different directions. It

required but a very short time for them to reach the desirable stand-points.

As they did so, they saw that the planking or shield was carefully carried by three Indians, who were moving in a crouching posture, and were securely concealed from the most vigilant watcher within the house.

There would have been no difficulty in shooting an Indian apiece from where our friends stood, and Jud even thought that he could wipe out two with his own weapon, by manœuvring so as to get them in the right range.

But both were anxious, if possible, to manage the business in such a way that the watching and observant Sioux would be deceived as to the directions from which the shots came. So long as this deception could be carried out, it inured greatly to the advantage of the defenders, as it intensified the appreciation the aborigines already felt of their wide-awake characteristics.

There was but one way by which this could be done, and even that was more likely to fail than succeed.

If the Sioux should manage to place themselves against the side of the house, they would be apt to expose themselves, before they could get fairly to work; and to kindle their fire, they would be compelled to leave their shell altogether.

But whether, in the collection of their material with which to kindle a fire, they would wander far enough away to place themselves within range of the guns, remained to be seen.

The probabilities were, that they would not, and yet, if they did, then would be the opportunity of the scouts.

As one half of the ventriloquist's art consists in making his audience believe they are going to hear his words from the point toward which he has directed their attention, so there was some likelihood that even the keen-eared Sioux would not detect the exact location of the sharpshooters, who had taken upon themselves the task of turning back, for a short time at least, the great danger from conflagration.

This "consummation so devoutly to be wished," however, was frustrated. An entirely unlooked-for and inexplicable action upon the part of the Sioux, rendered unnecessary any demonstration from the two men, who were so eagerly awaiting the opportunity to put two more of their enemies out of the way.

The three redskins who were steadily advancing with their shield before them, had almost reached the house, when they came to a halt, and remained stationary for several minutes.

While they were standing thus, Jud heard a faint whistle from the wood behind them. Immediately after, the plank structure began moving, but in a backward direction.

This retrogression continued until the wood was reached, when the shield was thrown down, and they scattered among the trees, and all was still again.

Neither Jud nor Red Plume, with all their wood-

lore, could comprehend the meaning of this singular action.

“P’raps they didn’t start right, and are going to try it over again,” he muttered, waiting for the reappearance of the curious structure.

But minute after minute passed, and nothing more was seen of it. Convinced, at last, that this stratagem was abandoned, Jud stealthily made his way back to his two friends, where he was speedily followed by Red Plume.

Here the two hunters exchanged notes, and found that neither could enlighten the other. Nothing remained to them but conjecture.

“I’ll be hanged if I understand it,” said Jud, scratching his head, and addressing himself particularly to Captain Swarthaussen. “Just at the minute when it looked as though the blamed thing was going to do the business for them, they jist backs out, and gives it all up.”

“You said they were signalled to?”

“Exactly.”

“The signal was perhaps intended as a warning that danger threatened them, and they acted the part of discretion.”

“It wasn’t that,” was the decided reply of the hunter. “Ef the redskins had larned that we was waiting for the chance, how long do you s’pose they would have waited before they’d sent a dozen bullets through *us*?”

“I see.”

“ You’ll have to hit on something else, before you can tell us the reason they backed out.”

“ If you can’t explain it, there is no use of my trying, so I give up the conundrum. But I do think—”

“ Sh!” interrupted Red Plume, who was stretched flat upon the earth, and who had detected something suspicious.

The party, as we have intimated in another place, were concealed under a dense growth of shrubbery, their hiding-place being reached by their crawling under it, and maintaining a prone position, so as not to disturb the vegetation around them.

When they conversed, it was in such cautious undertones that they could barely hear each other, and there was no danger of their voices reaching the ears of others for whom they were not intended.

But, for all that, Red Plume had detected the stealthy tread of a moccasin, and had given instant warning.

At this instant none of the others had heard it, but Jud’s suspicions of the cause of the alarm were instantly confirmed by detecting the same faint sound.

Some Indian was coming that way, certainly, though they could hardly believe he was searching for them, as they had used such caution and circumspection in their movements, that both were certain they had not been observed.

There were savages all around them, but as they

moved freely and without suspicion of being observed, they were the more easily avoided.

Soon the interloper came so near that all heard him. He seemed to be walking slowly by, as though he were searching for something. When directly opposite, he halted, so close, that even in the gloom Red Plume could distinguish the outlines of his figure.

Here he stood a short time, as if in the attitude of listening, and then, instead of moving away, walked still nearer, and parted the bushes.

As he leaned over, he was visible to every one of the four men, who almost held their breath. Both Jud and Red Plume clutched their knives ready for the instant use, which seemed inevitable.

But the four were literally immersed in darkness, and sharp as was the trained vision of the savage, he could not detect the slightest sign of them. He stood only a few seconds, when, apparently satisfied that there was nothing there that needed looking after, he moved on.

Not until he was fairly beyond all danger of hearing, did one of the men break silence.

“Cracky! he was looking for us,” exclaimed Muggins, with a great sigh of relief.

“If he had been, he would have found us,” replied Jud; “but he’s gone, and we will think no more about him. Red Plume!”

Thus appealed to, the Indian listened to something that was uttered in his own tongue. A few questions

and answers passed, when the old hunter turned to Captain Swarthausen, by way of explanation.

“ There’s sumfin that looks worse than all ! ”

“ What’s that ? ”

“ In the last half hour there has a breeze come up. ”

“ What of it ? ”

“ And it’s a northerly wind. ”

“ And what of *that* ? ”

“ That’s from the barn right square toward the house. ”

“ Ah ! I see what you mean. That is bad, isn’t it ? You seem to feel certain that they will fire the barn. ”

“ When I see *that*, I am, ” replied the hunter, pointing in the direction of the building referred to.

No one saw the point indicated, but they knew what he meant, and every eye was turned to the north, and immediately the appalling truth burst upon them.

The barn had been fired, and the wind was blowing directly toward the house. No earthly power could now save it !

CHAPTER XVII

THE FLIGHT

IT was far into the night when the barn burst out into flames, and a strong, steady wind blew it powerfully toward the light frame structure of the house.

For some time those within the building held strong hopes of escaping a "burning out," but only a few minutes were necessary to prove that nothing less than a miracle could prevent the flames being communicated to the roof over their heads.

Then Fielding looked hurriedly about him for quilts and blankets. There was an abundance of these, and he dashed down stairs to Dinah.

"Now, if thee will help me," he said, "we will speedily saturate these with water, and I will hasten through the trap door, and spread them upon the roof, and thus perchance we may check the conflagration."

"What do you mean by *saterate* them?" asked the cook, with her knuckles against her sides, and her arms akimbo.

"Wet them—soak them."

"What with?"

"Water, of course."

Dinah shook like an immense bowl of jelly.

“Dar ain’t a peck ob water in de house; my baby drunked ’bout a bushel himself.”

The Friend recoiled, thunderstruck.

“Verily, I am astonished,” said he, almost in a despairing tone.

“It would ’stonish anybody to see dat baby eat and drink. Why, only toder day—”

But the affrighted Friend did not stay to hear her through. The next minute he was in the second story, where Mr. and Mrs. Prescott were fairly stunned at the magnitude of the calamity that had come upon them so suddenly.

“We are lost! we are lost!” moaned the latter, wringing her hands, and walking back and forth. “Why do not Red Plume and Jud come to our assistance? Have mercy, Heavenly Father!”

She was constantly praying to Him who alone could save her, while the husband was beseeching help from the same divine source.

“Do thee haste to the lower story,” commanded Fielding, taking hold of each, and shoving them toward the stairs. “We will all meet there, and prepare to rush from the door.”

The two mechanically obeyed him, hardly conscious of what they were doing, or what he had said; and tarrying only long enough to make sure of his order being heeded, the young man rushed into another room for Lige and Cato.

This apartment was illuminated by the glare of the

burning barn, and the instant he burst open the door, he saw the latter, curled up and sound asleep upon the floor, while Lige was in the very act of climbing out the window.

Like a panther, the Quaker leaped entirely across the room, and catching the negro by the arm, drew him in with such violence that he was thrown prostrate upon his face.

The shock awoke Cato, who stared about him in bewilderment.

“What de ole Harry is de matter?” he asked, blinking and staring around in the strong light. “Dar must be a 'clipse ob de moon, dat frowed Lige out ob bed, and Master Fielding am picking him up.”

By this time the baffled African was upon his feet, sullen and scowling.

“What you catch hold me dat way fur?” he demanded, clutching and working his fingers as if he held an invisible knife, which he was about to bury in the body of the Friend.

“Thou wert running into great danger, for the heathen will see thee, and fire their guns at thee.”

“Wal, won't we git burned up if we stay h'ar?”

“It is not our intention to remain here. We propose to leave the house, but not by way of the window.”

“How you gwine to git out den?”

“Go to the lower floor, and when all is ready we will make a rush, and perchance through the assistance

of Divine Providence, and our friends who are stationed on the outside, some of us may escape to a place of safety. ”

Lige stood without moving. Baffled at all points, treated with rudeness and insult, he was about ready for open revolt. The opportunity was good, when the attention of those who esteemed themselves his masters was taken up with the terrible danger upon them.

But when Lige looked up and saw the gleam of the eyes that were fixed upon him, he quailed, and obeyed like a whipped dog. Without a word he disappeared down stairs.

At this juncture the voice of Dinah was heard calling to her baby to hurry down, without an instant's delay, and it is hardly necessary to say that her summons was not in vain.

Once more Fielding ran to the upper story to see whether there was any possible means by which any could escape from the building in that direction.

But there was none, and he hurried to the window for some signal from his friends. They were on the alert. On the edge of the clearing, next the lake, he caught sight of an Indian, who instantly made a curious gesture with his arm; but the Quaker understood it, and he made a returning signal as a promise that the advice of Red Plume would be followed.

As Fielding started to move away, he heard a crackling noise over his head which arrested him. Listening

a moment, he sprang upon a chair, and slightly raised the trap-door.

His worst fears were realized. The storm of blazing cinders that filled the air had driven large numbers upon the roof, and the twists of flame could be seen in a dozen places, spreading and burning with a fierceness which showed how good a fuel not only they, but the whole building, were, and how speedily the entire structure would be reduced to ashes.

The Sioux were wild with delight. They could be seen leaping, and running, flinging their arms, screeching, whooping, howling, and acting like so many imps of darkness.

And justly so; for had they not triumphed at last? They had lost a few of their number, but now they could revenge themselves in whatsoever manner they chose. The whole household were doomed, and a few minutes more, and the victory would be complete.

The ingenuity of the human mind is wonderful, and the shrewdness displayed by the friendly Sioux, in this dreadful crisis, was amazing. It is a well-known fact that, during the Minnesota massacres—as has often been the case before and since—brave men were stupefied by the appalling character of the danger which burst so suddenly upon them. In one case a reeking redskin leaped into a wagon, containing not only women, but grown-up men, and tomahawked one after the other, without any resistance, the men sitting with

drooping arms and stolid faces, and receiving the death-blow without moving a muscle in defence.

But Red Plume was one of the few whose mind seemed to rise above every peril encountered. The greater its magnitude, the more fertile was he in his intellectual resources.

The truth was, he had been through such scenes as this before, and there was hardly a quickening of a pulse-beat, as he partly screened himself in the edge of the wood, and signalled to Fielding to bring himself and friends from the front-door, and advance directly across the clearing, where they would inevitably be captured without exception.

Indeed the young Quaker displayed an ingenuity scarcely second to that of his dusky friend.

He reasoned, that if the men ventured first, they would instantly be shot down to prevent their escape, while the women coming after, would be captured. As the latter calamity was unavoidable, all that could be done was to avert the former.

The only method of doing this was for the fugitives to rush out in a body. The presence of the females would probably prevent their being fired upon—but if that failed, there was nothing more to be done.

The upper part of the house was one roaring mass of flames, and there was imminent danger of the roof falling in every moment.

Fielding unbarred the front door with his own hands.

“Thou wilt place thine arm around thy wife,” said he, addressing Mr. Prescott, “and run for the large oak which is on the edge of the clearing.”

“But we cannot reach it; the consequences will be certain death.”

“Think not of consequences, but do thy duty and trust to God.”

“And you?”

“Will follow with Dinah and Lige and Cato.”

“Whar dat baby ob mine?” demanded the African mother, whirling round, and catching him by his ear. “You take hold my hand, Cato, and if you tries to run away, I’ll whack you till you can’t stand.”

“If by any possibility we should reach the wood?” asked Prescott, turning to Fielding.

“Keep down the side of th e lake, and run as fast as thou canst.”

In that solemn moment, when all stood, as it were, in the very presence-chamber of death, it was but natural that an appeal should be sent up to the only Power that could stretch forth its hand to save them.

And the whole party, excepting the negroes, who, it may be said, had no realizing sense of their situation, bowed their heads, and in silence sent up such an appeal to God, as only the human heart can do, when the darkness of death is closing around, and no mortal being can help. Thus the soul turns instinctively to the one great Source of strength.

The next moment Fielding drew the door wide open,

and Prescott and his wife stepped forth. At this time, the burning barn and building lit up the clearing with a light stronger than at noonday, and many a dark eye was fixed upon them.

The pause was but for a moment, when both started on a light run toward the point indicated by the Quaker before starting.

They had not gone one half the distance when the silence (which had lasted but a few seconds) was broken by a whoop, and, at the same instant, three Indians were seen running diagonally across the clearing, in such a direction as to intercept them.

"We are lost! we are lost!" moaned Mrs. Prescott, about to sink to the earth, when her husband supported her.

"Never mind; they will only take us prisoners."

The two made all haste, and, as they reached the wood, found they were in the power of the trio of Indians, one of whom instantly took away Mr. Prescott's gun.

At this juncture, Dinah, the cook, holding her baby by one hand, while her arm, which looked like the leg of a piano, rested upon that of Fielding, sallied forth.

She was of enormous size, weighing well nigh two hundred; and, as may be understood, was not capable of going very fast; but, under the urging and tugging of Cato, she essayed a trot, which almost shook her to pieces.

Scarcely a rod had been passed, when her foot

caught in some obstruction, and she capsized, despite the heroic efforts of Fielding to prevent the catastrophe.

"Verily, I fear thou art grievously injured," he said, as, unmindful of his own great danger, he endeavored to help her on her feet.

"Should think I was!" she groaned, coming up by degrees. "Whar's dat Cato? Gone and runned away! Ah, dar he is!"

And she caught sight of her undutiful child approaching, just at the moment he was seized in the iron grip of a brawny savage.

"Drop dat pet ob mine!" she fairly shrieked, bearing down upon the Sioux like a lightning express train, under tolerable headway, on a down grade; she struck him with a momentum that was irresistible, and the Indian was shuffled a dozen feet or so before he could check himself.

"I'll teach you to be interferin' wid oder folks' babies!" she exclaimed, making another lunge at him, while he ingloriously retreated, amid the laughter of his comrades, and while Cato took shelter under the wing of his parent.

"Whar dat Lige?" asked the panting Dinah, glaring around for the other sable gentleman, but failing to see him.

"He has fled," replied Fielding, who had seen him slip off to one side and run in a different direction.

“ Wall, he has allers been a heap ob trouble; let him go. ”

There were now something like a dozen Indians grouped around the captives, and their intention was to kill every one of them, although whether to do it now, or to wait until daylight, was a question which seemed unsettled by any of them.

But thus far everything had gone precisely as Red Plume had anticipated, and it remained for him to give another evidence of the extraordinary fertility of resource at his command.

The number of Sioux who held the captives in charge was so large, that while there was a good prospect of their being overpowered, yet Red Plume knew it could not be done without a desperate fight, the length of which would bring all the Sioux in the neighborhood into it, and, in all probability, insure the death of more than one member of the party.

His object, therefore, was to divert the attention of the Sioux to another quarter, and to draw as large a number as possible away from the prisoners.

Suddenly a peculiar whoop was heard from the other side of the clearing, beyond and behind the blazing house and barn. It was the Sioux call for assistance. Something had been discovered of a startling nature, and the majority of the redskins made a rush for the spot at once.

Still, they did not forget their usual caution, and

three of them, fully armed, remained in charge of those whom they had already secured.

This, under ordinary circumstances, would have been all sufficient, as these savages were armed to the teeth, and the captives did not possess so much as a single knife among them.

The Sioux had barely time to disappear, when a voice at no great distance called to the fugitives:

“ Now run, right down 'long the lake ! ”

No one saw the speaker, but Fielding recognized the voice as that of old Jud, and he lost not a moment in obeying it.

“ Now is our time, friends, ” said he, “ for truly that was the voice of a friend. Heed not the heathens, but make all haste.

Mr. Prescott and his wife made a rush down the side of the lake, the Quaker, Dinah and Cato attempting to follow. Lige was still invisible.

As may be supposed, they were hardly allowed to start, when they were fiercely encountered by the three Sioux who held them in charge.

Not the variation of a hair's breadth of the original programme of Red Plume had as yet occurred. This was precisely the number he had conjectured would be left behind to guard the prisoners, and that which now followed was calculated upon when he laid his course of action.

The Indian who raised his tomahawk in the face of Mr. Prescott, in such a threatening manner, was sud-

denly stricken to the earth, with his head cloven by the weapon of Red Plume, who hurled it while he was yet a rod distant. Almost at the same instant, old Jud sprang forward, with a panther-like movement, and buried his knife to the hilt in the back of the second. just as Captain Swarthausen made a lunge with his sword at the third, who dodged the blow with no little skill, and succeeded in getting off in the woods without a scratch.

Not a second could be spared. In a few minutes, at most, the other Sioux would detect the trick that had been played upon them, and would be back again.

Prescott and his wife resumed their flight, under the pilotage of old Jud, while Red Plume lingered in the rear, which was really the place of danger.

Dinah had rested sufficiently to recover her "wind" and she now pitched forward again, like an overloaded elephant, with the hand of Cato clasped firmly by her own, while the kind-hearted Fielding still supported her on the left.

In this order the flight was begun, and kept up with desperate vigor, which it is almost impossible to realize. Every one fully comprehended that it was a struggle for life, and did his and her utmost.

The fugitives had not yet gotten beyond the glare of the burning buildings, when several whoops told that their flight had been discovered by the Sioux, and they were in hot pursuit.

If they could get fairly within the darkness of the

wood before being discovered, there was a good prospect of escape, as the Indians not only were unable to follow their trail, but had no means of detecting the direction they had taken.

Fully aware of this, Jud urged them to the utmost, and the bulky Dinah threw her whole soul into the one effort to get over the ground as fast as possible.

A person who for years has been accustomed to walking at a moderate gait, is very apt to think it an easy matter to run; but when he comes to undertake it, strange pains and sprains occur in different parts of the body, and he is pretty certain to break down all at once, and almost as soon as he starts.

So with the cook. She was just fairly under way, when one of her ankles suddenly gave out and she dropped as if shot.

“Dat’s orful!” she groaned, as Fielding again helped her to her feet. “I b’leve dat leg is broke. Jus’ hear dem Injians yawp.”

“Strive thy best,” said the mild-spoken Quaker; “there is a boat close at hand, in which thou canst speedily rest thy weariness.”

“I should think I was doing my best,” she ejaculated, as she managed to get on her feet again.

Old Jud would not allow Prescott and his wife to pause, when the accident occurred to the cook.

“Ef we’ve got to lose any one, it may as well be her,” he said, as he hurried them forward. “Like as not she’ll sink the boat anyway when she gets into it.”

Mrs. Prescott was exhausted, and began to lag, seeing which, the hunter seized her arm and almost carried her along.

It seemed that the whooping Sioux were all around them. One thing was certain, they were not far behind, and the danger of discovery was growing more imminent each minute.

The boat in which they intended taking refuge, when there appeared to be any safety in doing so, was still some distance away, while, if the aborigines should gain any idea of the line of retreat adopted by the fugitives, they could easily intercept them, and turn the whole party back in the woods again, there to fall into their hands as soon as morning should come.

Thus far our friends had been tramping through the woods; but for a short distance there was an open space for a hundred yards or so, and beyond this a dense mass of undergrowth where the waiting boat lay concealed.

It was the intention of old Jud not to expose himself and friends to any additional danger, by entering this place, but to skirt it until the dense bushes beyond were reached; but at the very moment he reached it, he saw several shadowy forms move across the opposite end, and he suddenly drew back.

“The varmints are there,” said he; “follow me, and be careful not to speak a word.”

It would have been the part of prudence for the scout to leave his friends where they were, while he

went forward to reconnoitre, but time was now of such importance that he took the more dangerous course of allowing them to accompany him.

But, hurried as they were, he could not forget entirely his usual habits of caution, and so considerable time was consumed before the cover of the undergrowth was reached.

When, however they got within this again, nothing was seen or heard of the Indians, and Jud stole forward until he reached the edge of the lake, where he was pleased to find the boat lying just as he had left it hours before.

Prescott and his wife took their seats in the stern, but the hunter did not enter.

“ Stay here till I come back, ” said he. “ I must go and see what has become of the rest. ”

This was the very thing Prescott was about to ask him to do, and so he bade him good speed on his errand of duty.

The fact that nothing now was heard of those in the rear, was ominous of evil, and Jud hurried through the wood, expecting at every step to receive evidence of the whole three being in the hands of the Sioux, as he knew that the Friend was too chivalrous to desert even such an humble individual as Dinah, the black cook, when she was in peril, though he incurred a fate similar to hers, by remaining.

But matters were found in a better condition than he dared to hope. About half way to the point where they

had parted company, he encountered Cato, who at first was disposed to run, but was quickly checked by the cautious voice of the hunter, inquiring as to what was the matter.

“Golly! I was jist lookin’ for you.”

“Sh! not so loud! Where’s your mother?”

“She’s gib out.”

“What’s the matter?”

“She tried to jump ober a log, and sprained de off leg, and has gib out.”

“Where is she?”

“Back yunder, a sittin’ on de wery tree dat she broke her neck ober.”

“Is Fielding with her?”

“Yas; he’s got a limb in his hand brushin’ de flies off ob her nose, and she sent me to tell you dat you’ll have to s’cuse her from runnin’ any more races at present.”

“It won’t do for her to stay there,” said the hunter, “the varmints are rampagin’ through the woods. Where’s Captain Swarthaussen?”

“Jingo! I hain’t seen nuffin ob him since we started.”

In the hurry and confusion of the flight, Captain Swarthaussen had become separated from the others; but knowing where they all were to rendezvous, he had probably purposely refrained from rejoining them, and had continued on at such a prudent rate as to make him considerably behind Jud in reaching the boat.

From the beginning, Muggins had been set down as of no account, and he was despatched to a point a half mile down the lake, where they agreed to call for him in case the company got off without accident.

Those, then, who might still be considered in great peril were Fielding, and Dinah and her son.

Show me where they are," commanded Judkins, in his cautious manner, "and be careful not to make any noise about it, and keep your gab shut."

"Dat's what I allers try to do," said Cato, as he led the way. "I nebber was much ob a hand to talk, but mother always said I was, and I said I wasn't, and so yer see we had a 'spute ober it, and couldn't neber agree 'bout it nohow—"

But the scout was in no mood to listen to the loquacity of the African, and he peremptorily closed his mouth before he had time even to finish his sentence.

The shouts and whoops of the Indians had, in a great measure, ceased; but this was no evidence that they were not prosecuting the search with as great vigor as ever.

The burning buildings had been mostly consumed, and only a dull glare could be seen where, a short time before the whole heavens were illuminated. The property of the Prescotts had been destroyed, nothing but the glowing embers being left where the handsome house and barn had stood so long in safety.

Only a few minutes were necessary for old Jud to reach the tree where Dinah was sitting. As he came

up, he found Fielding endeavoring to convince her that it was possible for her to make some progress, if she would only put forth the attempt.

“I tell you it’s onpossible!” said she, somewhat petulantly; “dat ar leg ain’t worth shucks.”

“But I will do my utmost to assist thee.”

“Ain’t no use ob talkin’—”

“No; thar’s been a little too much of it,” interrupted the hunter, as he strode forward, in no very amiable mood. “You can do as you please, old Midnight—sit on that log till you grow fast, or go ’long with us.”

“Wal, I’ll hef to sit yar, den—Masser Fielding and me baby can stay wid me.”

“No; they can’t, I shan’t let one of ’em stay. You can set it out alone, ef you want to.”

Dinah had seen old Jud before, and she had no desire to thwart him, so she concluded to make another effort.

But she had really sprained her limb, and was not able to walk of herself; but Fielding assisted at one side, and old Jud at the other, while Cato offered to carry her shoes; and, supported in this manner, they started for the lake.

The latter, fortunately, was quite close at hand, and reaching the bank, they let her down, gently, where they concluded to leave her until they could bring the boat to her, while Fielding and Jud started off with the promise of a speedy return. Of course, they could not

refuse to allow Cato to remain with her, although the latter would have been better pleased in almost any other place.

Old Jud and Fielding had walked some distance in the wood, when the latter said:

“As it seems that I can be of no further assistance to thee, if thou art willing, I will hasten to Lillian and Edith, who, perchance, are in need of help.”

The scout could offer no objection, and the Friend vanished almost on the instant.

When Jud reached the boat, he found Captain Swarthausen there and waiting for him.

“Where is Muggins?”

“Gone on around the lake, I suppose. I haven’t come across him since we started.”

“Have you seen Red Plume?”

“No; but there were Indians all around in the woods, and it seems a miracle that we have escaped thus far.”

The hunter then explained that the rest of the party were waiting for them up the lake, and that he had promised to return for them.

As there was no telling whether it would be safe to come back to this spot, the whole party, numbering four, stepped into the boat, when the astounding discovery was made that it would not hold another person!

The vessel was simply an ordinary canoe, intended to carry two persons, but capable of supporting double

that number. The large boat, in which the younger members of the party had crossed the lake, had probably fallen into the hands of the Sioux, as no one knew where to find it.

Here was a dilemma, which brought a smile to the face of the grizzled old hunter as he reflected what the consequences would be of dropping Dinah in among them.

“The boat would go down, and, like enough, she would float, and the rest of us would have to swim.”

“What are we to do, then?” inquired the Captain. “I can see but one remedy, and that is for Prescott and me to get out and foot it, while you take charge.”

As this was, indeed, the only escape from the dilemma, it was adopted, and Jud Judkins, with no one in the canoe excepting Mrs. Prescott, began feeling his way cautiously along the shore of the lake in search of Dinah and her heir.

As both Red Plume and the hunter had explained to the different members of the party the location of Lillian and Edith, there were now quite a company threading through the woods, all converging toward the supposed camping ground of Mr. Pipkins and his charge.

Fielding had an anxiety at heart, which he carefully concealed when in the presence of others; but now, when alone, he sped through the woods like an Indian upon the trail of an enemy.

He knew, indeed, that the two girls needed the

presence of strong arms, and one of them especially had scarcely been absent from his thoughts during the most fearful moments of the siege and attack upon the house. It was Edith, the brave, the magnificent, the reckless haste that the officer found necessary to check had never known before.

Behind the Friend came Captain Swarthausen and Prescott, the latter burning with an apprehension that seemed to increase each moment, and urged him into a reckless haste that the officer found necessary to check almost constantly, lest both should be precipitated into some grave danger.

And ahead of them all, plodding patiently through the woods, and almost at his goal, was Muggins, who, poor man, knew and suspected nothing of the tragic deed that the forest had witnessed in the darkness of the night, but he counted confidently upon meeting his wife in the course of an hour or so at the most, when they would unitedly continue their efforts to escape, and, perhaps, all in good time reach Fort Grandon, where they might laugh to scorn the rage of the Sioux.

But none of the party was out of danger as yet, for the redskins were in every portion of the wood, more silent than before, but more wary and none the less determined in tracing out the fugitives who thus far had eluded them in such a clever manner.

The last exploit had shown the Sioux a fact which they had only partly believed before. General occurrences had led some of them to suspect that there were

some outside parties assisting those within the building, but they were uncertain until the stratagem, which has been referred to, was tried upon them with such success.

If there had been any doubt remaining, it was removed by this, as well as by the testimony of their only surviving comrade, who had been left in charge of the prisoners.

We have referred to the wonderful sagacity of Red Plume. This will be more apparent when we state that, up to this point, his scheme of rescue had scarcely varied in the least from what he had planned at the beginning.

The gathering of the redskins around the fugitives after they had issued from the building—the diversion by means of his own false signals—its success—the attack of the scout, Old Jud—the flight of the whites—their separation in the woods, and their final convergence toward the point at the extreme end; all these were what he had counted upon, and what had taken place just as predicted.

When Dinah was deposited in the hunter's canoe, and her son Cato was placed near her, and he in turn followed by Jud, it may well be supposed that the frail boat was well loaded. In fact, a few more pounds would have sent it to the bottom of the lake; and when the leader took the paddle in hand he made up his mind that he was in no condition to run a race with any hostile boat. All that he could hope to do was gradually

to propel the boat toward the river, down which the attempt would doubtless be made to reach Fort Grandon.

At first he was undecided whether to head straight across the lake for the mouth of the river, or whether to coast the shore. Finally, he took the latter course, advancing with his usual care, and keeping in the dark bank of shadow as well as was possible.

A common fear was now upon all the fugitives—and that was, that day would break before they could get well out of the way of the Indians.

As soon as it should become fairly light the Sioux would be able to follow their trail, if found; and what these people could do to the injury of the fugitives, it was very certain they would do.

So, as old Jud gently propelled the canoe along the bank, he not only was on the alert against running into immediate danger, but he was busily speculating upon the future, and what the prospect was of getting the whole party safely away, when they should all unite and start upon their journey southward.

Dinah, now and then, gave utterance to a groan, but she had gained such an appreciating sense of her danger from the scout as well as the Indians, that she was tolerably quiet.

Cato dropped asleep almost the moment he seated himself, and his mother probably would have done the same had not her sprained limb forbidden.

Slowly the canoe coursed along the coast until fully half the distance was passed, when the faintest and

most tremulous of whistles reached the ears of Jud, and, resting on his paddle, he replied in the same manner.

“What dat?” asked the alarmed Dinah.

“Shet up!” commanded Jud, raising his oar in a threatening manner.

Again the signal was repeated, and immediately after, the African sister discerned the outlines of a canoe bearing down upon them. She was about to utter a screech of alarm, but another significant gesture from the hunter prevented, and she cowered in silence, while the boat came up like a shadow.

One single occupant in it only, and he was Red Plume. Laying himself alongside, the two exchanged a few words, and then Cato was awakened, and compelled to step into the other boat.

This partially equalized matters, and the two boats headed across the lake toward the mouth of the Crescent River, the Indian taking the lead, and old Jud following close in the rear.

At the same time, the growing light in the east showed that the eventful night was drawing to a close, and only a few minutes more of favoring darkness remained.

Day was indeed coming—a day not less fraught with incident and peril than the dozen hours that had already passed away.

The two men who, it may be said, were the directors of the little party, were veterans enough in wilder-

ness and frontier life to dread the rising of the sun which was to guide the merciless Sioux in their relentless tracking of the fugitives through the wood, and they now drove their boats with astonishing speed through the water to where the helpless females and their equally helpless companion were awaiting their coming, hopefully, and yet with the trembling apprehension of those who had learned, in some degree, the fearful peril that impended over them.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MEETING

“ UGH, now ! this is a bore ! Here I’ve been out over night, a mark for the dew to aim at, and liable to catch cold, and—atchew ! ”

Mr. Pipkins awoke at an unusually early hour for him (that is, when the sun was but a few degrees above the horizon), and throwing off his blanket, sat up in the boat, and made the remark above given, rounding off his period with a terrific sneeze, which being repeated several times, excited considerable apprehension upon his part.

“ Jingo ! a few more explosions like that, and the end of my nose will be blowed off ! Fact is, I always considered a sneeze as a human earthquake, from the way it shakes a fellow up. Hello ! there’s Edith and Lil asleep yet. Wonder if they’ve got a cold ? ”

The young man stretched his limbs, yawned, and seemed gradually to collect his bewildered senses.

“ No ; it isn’t a dream ! ” he suddenly exclaimed, as he slapped his knee ; “ there *was* a young fellow here last night—that Colonel Havens from Fort Grampus, and he took Lil off in a canoe and has brought her back

again; but what's become of *him*? That's the question, as the immortal William observes."

After a moment's severe cogitation he shook his head.

"I give it up; it's a conundrum I can't answer. The only solution I can give is that he was so smitten with jealousy when he saw me that he brought Lil back and committed suicide. But, by jingo! I must stretch my legs."

The canoe was so close to the bank that he had only to step upon the land, and he did so without disturbing the fair sleepers remaining behind.

The latter awoke shortly after his departure, and, as may be supposed, were both thoughtful and sad. They instinctively turned their eyes toward the lake, as if they would penetrate to the other shore and learn what had there taken place during the hours they had slept.

All was still, but what did it signify?

Were father and mother still living? Was this oppressive silence ominous of death? Was all hope gone?

Earnestly and fervently the sisters prayed to Heaven in their dire extremity—prayed not so much for themselves as for those who they hoped, but hardly dare believe, were still living.

Making their ablutions in the clear water of the stream upon which they were floating, they stepped

upon the bank and awaited the return of their companion.

He was not long in making his appearance, and he came with the question, while he smoked his meerschäum :

“ Lil, where is that Colonel that was here last night? ”

“ He went back hours ago.”

“ Why didn’t he stay? ”

“ He was compelled to return.”

“ But he ought not to have been compelled when his presence was needed here.”

“ He offered to remain but he could be of no use,” replied Edith, “ and he must be many miles away by this time.”

“ Oh! it doesn’t make any particular difference,” remarked Pipkins, in his lofty way, “ he didn’t strike me as of much account, anyhow.”

“ He is a nephew of Captain Swarthausen, and one of the bravest young men in the country,” Lillian hastened to say with considerable warmth.

“ Oh!—ah!—I am sure I have no objection; but I have just become aware of a highly important fact.”

The sisters looked inquiringly toward him.

“ We haven’t had supper or breakfast, and what’s more, there isn’t a very brilliant prospect of getting one at present.”

All were ahungered and faint, but the girls had scarcely thought of food. Indeed, there was nothing to

be gained by thinking of it, as it was entirely beyond their means to procure any.

“If I only had a fishing-line,” said Pipkins, looking wishfully at the water, “I might persuade some of those fish to come out, and then I suppose you could clean and cook them.”

“You have matches, else how came your pipe lit?”

“Yes; I discovered several stowed away in the corner of the side pocket, under the arm of my duster. When you can’t eat it’s a very good thing to have some of the weed about you; but for all that, I would very much enjoy throwing myself outside of a porter-house steak just now.”

“Oh! if father and mother would come,” said Lillian, gazing with a longing and inexpressible sadness toward the lake.

“By cracky, but that reminds me of something I had forgotten entirely,” said Pipkins very earnestly, as he removed his pipe from his mouth. “I took a little walk up the river bank, and if I ain’t very greatly mistaken I saw signs of Indians coming down the shore of the lake.”

As if to give emphasis to his words, a rustling among the undergrowth was heard at this moment, and immediately after Captain Swarthaussen stepped forth to view. Behind him came Fielding and Muggins, all of their countenances lit up with pleasure as they greeted the girls.

But the faces of the latter blanched with a terrible

fear, and Edith was barely able to gasp out: "Father and mother! where are they?"

"Not far off," replied the cheery voice of the Captain. "Red Plume and Jud are coming down the river in a canoe. Your father came most of the way through the wood, but he got into the boat again with your mother, and they are close by."

"And the rest?" asked Lillian.

"Dinah and Cato are with them, but the darkeys 'Lige and Pomp are in the hands of the 'varmint,' as old Jud calls them."

Immediately after the large sail boat which had been used upon the lake floated in sight, and in it were all the others that had escaped from the Sioux, excepting Jud, who was immediately behind in his own canoe.

It was an affecting meeting, and many and devout were the thanks that were sent up to Him who had so mercifully brought them thus far through the dangers.

For some moments the others stood in respectful silence, until the parents and children had recovered from the agitation of their meeting, and then the startling question came from Muggins,

"*Where is my wife?*"

The sad truth could not be concealed from him, and Edith took upon herself the painful duty of telling him how she had died. The poor man was overcome with terror and grief for a time, and then he asked to be taken to her.

Edith led the way, while Captain Swarthausen and old Jud followed. The body had not been disturbed during the night, and was found precisely as it had fallen.

The sharp ashen paddles were brought from the boats, together with a sort of anchor from the larger one, the fluke of which served very well as a pick, and with these rude implements a grave was dug, in which all that was mortal of the woman was placed; and when the imperative voice of prudence commanded, the hunter led the sorrowing husband away from the scene.

CHAPTER XIX

A KEG OF WHISKY

IF THERE ever was need for hurry upon the part of any poor fugitives escaping from vengeance, there was need now for our friends to hasten on their way down the river to Fort Grandon.

It had been broad daylight for over an hour, and the opportunity was given the Sioux to take their trail, which, if followed for a slight distance, could not fail to give the savages a clue to the general direction, and, in all probability, to their destination.

None realized the true condition of affairs more than Red Plume and old Jud, who showed a haste in their movements, such as was rarely displayed by them.

Much as the entire party needed food, there was no time to wait for it now. All of them, excepting the two scouts mentioned, were placed in the larger boat, of which the sail was hoisted, and, assisted by wind and current, it sped quite rapidly down stream.

Some distance ahead of it went old Jud, alone in his canoe. He was the "feeler" thrown out in front to detect the danger that was before, and to warn and prevent the larger boat from running inextricably into it.

Red Plume, in his feather-like canoe, went up stream

and into the lake, his aim being to penetrate the intentions of the Sioux there, and to do what he could to divert them from a too rapid pursuit of the fugitives—a task which, it will be seen, was the most delicate and dangerous of all.

He was pleased, but surprised, that none of the redskins had as yet made their appearance at the point of embarkation; for, as several had walked the entire distance, they could easily trace them to the place.

As he emerged into the lake, he kept close under the undergrowth, on the western bank, and, with his keen, eager eye, scanned everything in his field of vision. The morning was clear and sunshiny, and he could not have been given a better opportunity for reconnoitering.

Near the centre of the lake rested the gem-like island, as quiet as at “creation’s morn.” All around the surface of the water was scarcely rippled by a breath of air, but in some places was of dazzling brightness from its reflection of the rays of the morning sun.

On his right were the charred remains of Captain Swarthausen’s house, and beyond the island could be seen the black and smoking ruins of Fielding’s and Prescott’s property; but strain his vision to the utmost, he could see nothing of the Sioux themselves.

Where could they be?

With all his shrewdness, Red Plume was at a loss to understand this silence upon the part of his race, and he sped rapidly along the shore of the lake toward the

ruins of the building, with the resolve to find out what it all meant.

It is a characteristic of the American Indian, that when he is doing nothing he is the most certain to be doing something; and the friendly redskin was certain that the curious quiet boded no good.

With lightning-like suddenness he stopped paddling, for his trained ear had caught a suspicious sound. It was very faint, and so distant, that he was certain it came from the immediate vicinity of the ruins of the Prescott house.

Pulling his canoe up under the bushes, he carefully concealed it, and passed silently through the wood toward the point which had been the scene of such stirring events during the last few hours. On the very edge of the clearing he came upon the entire Sioux party, and one glance was sufficient to explain the cause of the delay in the pursuit of the fugitives.

In the centre of the group was a small keg of whisky, or rather a small portion of a keg, for the greater part of its contents had already gone down the throats of the red men, and they were in a maudlin state of drunkenness, so ludicrous in its manifestations, that even the iron face of Red Plume relaxed into a grim smile as he gazed upon them.

About half were lolling upon the ground; some were asleep, others dubiously dancing, and quite a number were doing their best to give a war-song or speech, the latter of which was intended to be a thrilling recital of

the exploits of each particular speaker upon the war-path.

These men had need of the strong will of a determined chief to stop this maudlin scene, but unfortunately, the chief was the drunkest of the entire party, and had his arms clasped very lovingly about the neck of Lige, whom he evidently looked upon as a long lost brother.

The African was in about the same condition, and two more precious fools it would be difficult to imagine, as they executed a sort of bear dance around each other. Indeed, the "best man" in the company was not half sober, and the whole thirty could have been shot and scalped by a half dozen of their own race, had they come upon them at this time. They were not capable either of acting on the offensive or defensive.

No one will deny that whisky is a curse to humanity, but, in this case, at least, it had served a good purpose; for it cannot be considered possible that the fugitives, after congregating upon the opposite side of the lake, could have escaped the Sioux, had the latter been in their natural condition of mind and body.

It is certain that the redskins could have speedily overhauled them and it would have been an easy matter then to have picked off every man and woman from the shore, as the latter had no means of protection against the bullets. Crescent River was a very small stream at its beginning, and great as was the skill and courage of Red Plume and old Jud, it could have availed

nothing at such fearful disadvantages. The two hunters were stirred by a deeper anxiety than any of the party ever suspected at the time they started down the river, and correspondingly great was the pleasure of the friendly Indian when he discovered the drunkenness of the Sioux.

As he crouched in the woods, narrowly watching the performances, he wondered where this whisky came from. It was not to be supposed that the savages brought it with them, for they were incapable of carrying "fire-water" any distance at all, unless it was transported inside their organizations, nor was he aware that there was any such property in the house. Had he known that there was, he would not have failed to suggest that it should have been given as a peace offering to the screeching demons on the outside.

Still it was by no means impossible that Mr. Prescott owned the article, and that the Sioux had discovered it somewhere among the outbuildings, just at the moment to prevent the pursuit which was so much dreaded.

All this time Red Plume was wondering what had become of Pomp, the negro, who worked for the Quaker, Fielding. Lige was as muddled as any of them, and was among the first that he saw when he caught sight of the group as he came up.

It was hardly to be supposed that Pomp knew enough to escape, even when his captors were incapable of taking care of him. When last seen he was a

secure prisoner, and the only solution that Red Plume could give was, that the poor fellow had been put to death.

Quite a number of the Sioux had been slain, but death was not a welcome visitor at such a carnival, and he was carefully kept out of sight.

Confident that they had not buried their dead, the scout withdrew from the immediate vicinity of the party, and began a search for them.

He was not long in finding the ghostly collections, laid side by side, as if waiting sepulture, and at their feet lay the form of poor Pomp, who had been tomahawked and mangled in such a dreadful manner, that but for his color and dress, he could not have been identified among the others.

Quite a quantity of the guns and weapons belonging to the Sioux were arranged upon the ground near this *morgue*. Indeed, the appearance of everything indicated that the redskins had gone deliberately upon this spree, and had made their preparations for having, what is vulgarly termed, a "high old time."

Red Plume experienced no compunctions of conscience in appropriating a number of the choicest knives and rifles that he found upon the ground. He could have carried the entire stock away, but that he was fearful of arousing the ire of the owners, and provoking a pursuit, when there was a strong probability of none at all being attempted.

So he took only a half dozen or so, which he care-

fully bound up, and then started on his return, passing by the vicinity of the revel, so as to assure himself how it was progressing. He had been in such performances himself, and he knew what a powerful fascination they possessed for his race, so that there was every probability of the present one continuing through the entire day.

If it was certain that this revelry would last until nightfall, *these* redskins were to be "counted out" in reckoning up the danger to which the fugitives were still subject. A twelve hours' start was all-sufficient to place the fugitives entirely beyond *their* reach.

The carnival was raging high and higher. Warriors were crawling on their hands and knees to the keg, and clawing and hugging it for the fiery fluid it contained. Not a little was wasted in their dubious attempts to catch it in an old tin cup which had been picked up somewhere. Men rolled and tumbled over each other, shouted and whooped, and sung, struck out dangerously with their knives, loved and quarrelled, and did the hundred supremely foolish things which an intoxicated man is sure to do, or at least to try to do, when some one as brutish as himself is joined with him.

Nothing could be more satisfactory to Red Plume and he made haste to join his friends down the river.

CHAPTER XX

DOWN THE RIVER

AND all this time the fugitives were speeding down Crescent River toward Fort Grandon, helped forward by favoring wind and current, hopeful, yet trembling and apprehensive, glancing furtively backward and forward, and on either hand—for danger was all around them, and there was no telling from which quarter it would first come.

Several hundred yards ahead the canoe of old Jud could be seen now and then, as it rounded the curves, while he sat bolt upright in it, plying his paddle with consummate skill, and seeming never to look back at those who were so implicitly following his lead.

As a matter of course, for the first mile or so the only thought was of the Sioux in their rear, and not a second passed that there were not some of the party looking fearfully back for the expected and yet dreaded Red Plume, whose coming, for once at least, would be anything but welcome.

But as minute after minute went by, and nothing occurred to alarm them, hope began to rise in the breasts of all, and the few questions and answers exchanged gradually took upon themselves the form of a general conversation.

It was about this time that Captain Swarthausen learned that his nephew, Colonel Havens, had been over this same ground, or rather water, the night previous.

"Thunderation! is that so?" he exclaimed, when first he heard the astounding intelligence; "and why didn't he come to see *me*?"

But the Captain, as he sat controlling the rudder of the boat, answered his own question before any one else was given the opportunity.

"Of course he did come to see me, but he hadn't the chance; and George has been in the West long enough to know considerable of the nature of the 'noble red man of the woods,' as some of the novelists delight in calling him. But he inquired about me, Lillian, certainly?"

"Oh, yes; and was very anxious to see you. He was on the point of starting several times, but we dissuaded him."

"Sensible girl. But I suspect he found a very good substitute for me."

And the old officer smiled very significantly, others looked knowingly, and Lillian blushed charmingly.

"Fact of it is, he is more anxious to see his uncle than I ever knew him to be before, and this place which he professed to detest at first, has of late become wonderfully attractive to him."

"So it has to all of us," Edith hastened to say, for she knew her sister was pained by the pointed meaning

of the words of the Captain, who was all unconscious of the wounds he was inflicting. "Do you not find the place more pleasant to you than you did at first?"

"I admit that I do, provided you except the last day or two from your question. Just now, I think, we are all pleased with every mile we can put between us and it. Isn't that equally true?"

There was no denying the truth of the Captain's remark. For the time, Sleeping Water was nothing but a terror to them.

"But it cannot be always so," added Edith. "There must soon come a time when we shall be as safe there as if we were in the city of Chicago."

"And safer, too," said the Captain, who, as was well known, held no special admiration for this thriving village of the West. "Fact of it is, I would about as lief be back in the ruins of my house as to be in that infernal city, where I was knocked down in broad daylight and robbed. If I had the power, I would declare martial law there, and give some of them fellows justice—an article about as scarce there as it is in the city of New York."

"You mustn't condemn the place as a whole for what happened in some portion of it," replied Edith, who was glad to divert the officer from the line of remark with which he had opened the conversation.

"I was there twenty-five or thirty years ago," he said, "and came still nearer to losing my life."

"It must have been a small town at that time."

Captain Swarthausen laughed.

“Rather; it was in the dead of winter, and I was on a hunt with Lieutenant Duffield, when we lost our way, and were chased by a pack of wolves. We crossed the river on the ice, and right where the centre of Chicago now is we had to climb a tree to get out of their way.”

“Did both of you succeed in escaping?”

“We escaped from the wolves, it is true. There were over a hundred of them under the tree all night, yelping, and howling, and leaping up, till more than once I thought they would get up among the limbs and tear us all to pieces. For a while it was fun for us, and death to some of them at least. As fast as we could load, we fired down among them and every time we did so we killed one, and he was snapped up and devoured by the others in a twinkling.”

“You might have continued that until you had slain them all,” remarked Prescott, quite interested in the conversation.

“That’s what we thought at first, and we kept up the firing until we hadn’t a charge left between us; and then, I believe, there were more wolves under the tree than there were when we first scrambled up it, and the taste they had had of blood made them ten times more crazy for ours than they were at first.”

“Where did they all come from?”

“From everywhere. It was a bright moonlight night, and the snow made it lighter yet, so that we could see for a long distance; and, whatever direction

we looked, we could discern the lank, gray imps skittering over the snow-crust like mad, and all coming toward the tree, in which we were shivering to death."

"How did it end?"

"Oogh! but it was cold," replied the Captain, shuddering at the remembrance of his fearful adventure. "I never suffered so in my life. When we found we couldn't shoot any more, we tried to keep our spirits up by jesting, laughter, and story-telling; but I tell you it was up-hill work!"

"Were you there all night?"

"Every minute of it, and you can be sure it was the longest night I ever spent. I sang all the songs I knew, and so did Duffield; but we could hardly hear each other for the din the wolves made; and finally we gave that up. By-and-by the lieutenant told me he was freezing to death, but I laughed at him, although I had about made up my mind that that was the fate awaiting both of us."

"But you were mistaken."

"Partly so. The lieutenant was as brave a fellow as ever lived, and when he told me he was freezing, for all I ridiculed the idea, yet I knew he spoke the truth. He sat close to me, and I pinched him and struck him, and he did the same for me; and we kept climbing up and down among the limbs, until our hands became so numb that we couldn't do it any longer, when we got astride the same limb and braced ourselves as best we could. It wasn't a half hour before I saw Duffield nod-

ding, and by-and-by his head drooped against me, and he would have fallen if I hadn't caught him. "

" Was it the cold that affected him? " asked Prescott, while all the rest listened to the reply.

" It was that, and nothing else. The poor fellow was freezing, and no mistake. I cuffed his ears, pulled his hair, rubbed his arms and legs, shook him, and shouted in his ears, but it did no good. He roused up once or twice, and mumbled something about feeling sleepy, but I couldn't make him realize his condition. It is a curious thing about the effects of cold that the strongest and bravest men are often the first to succumb. Duffield and I were stationed at one of the frontier posts, about twenty miles away, and we had been there something over a year when this happened to us; and, during all that time, he had never met a superior in running, leaping or wrestling, or in what we called *vim*. It was believed that he could stand more exposure and fatigue than any man in the garrison, and yet here he was going into that *coma* which means death and nothing else, while I, although suffering intensely, was never more wide-awake in my life. But it has always been the same. You know when Fremont got lost in the Rocky Mountains—that is, when his guide lost him—the hardiest men of his party died from their exposure, while Fremont himself came out of it with scarcely any suffering at all. I didn't know what to make of it, and was expecting every minute to follow him; but I did not. My hands and feet ached with the

cold but no part of my body became benumbed. I knew, as long as they hurt me, that I was all right. By-and-by I found that Duffield was a dead weight against me, and then it was all up. He was frozen stark and stiff, and I had to sit there and hold him on the limb to keep him from falling down into the jaws of the wolves that howled and yelped harder than ever, as if they knew I was cheating them of their prey. But I hung on, and sat there, till broad daylight, with one arm around the neck of the lieutenant, and with the other hand clasped around a limb to help steady my own body; and, if ever a poor fellow had the horrors, you may be certain that I did. ”

“And when morning came, what then? ”

“Some of the wolves went away, and some stayed behind. By this time it was very evident that, unless I got help pretty soon, it would be all up with me. I had no ammunition left, and even if I had, both of our guns had fallen to the ground, and were being clawed to pieces by the ravenous devils below. They had ceased their yelping, but they kept moving around the tree and looking up, and licking their jaws, as if they knew they had but to wait a little while longer for a dainty breakfast.

“Just as the sun came above the horizon I heard a gun go off, and then there was a halloo. A few minutes later I saw a half dozen Indians and white men coming toward me on snow shoes, and I knew that I was saved. ”

“Who were they?”

“They had been sent out from the fort, and had been hallooing and hunting for us all night. When they came in sight the wolves scattered as if a grizzly bear had dropped down among them. A couple of the Indians had to climb the tree and help me down, and if I hadn't been rolled and rubbed in the snow until I screeched with pain, that would have wound up my earthly career. We carried Duffield back to camp, where he was buried with the honors of war and a better soldier was never put beneath the soil.”

“That was your first visit to Chicago? Were there no cabins anywhere in the neighborhood?”

“Yes; plenty of them, scattered here and there—but those that lived in them were too mean to come to our assistance, or it may be that they were so used to hearing the howling of wolves that they didn't think it worth while to pay attention to it.”

“But the noise of your guns ought to have reached them.”

“That's what I think, and that's what makes me mad when I think about it. That, as I just said, was my first visit to Chicago, and I have told you what happened to me the last time I went there; so you see I have no particular reason to like it, and every reason to hate it.”

“It isn't likely that a third mishap would befall you,” laughed Mr. Prescott, “if you should venture there again.”

“It would be just my luck to step upon some stray bombshell, and set it off by the friction of my foot, or else have some scallawag put an infernal machine in my pocket to blow me sky-high.”

The story of the Captain, and his comments, were thoroughly enjoyed by the listening fugitives. It is not to be supposed that Augustus Adolphus Pipkins would have permitted this attack upon the city of his adoption to have passed without a characteristic defence, had it not been that he was sound asleep—his head in the bottom of the boat, while his feet were resting upon the gunwale, and his fireless meerschaum, with its stem in his mouth, was resting upon his shirt front, upon which it had spilled the most of its contents of tobacco and ashes.

The great *forte* of the young man seemed to consist in dress, smoking, and sleep. To keep the flies from annoying him, he had tipped his hat down over his eyes and nose, and in this picturesque situation he was allowed to sleep in peace, while the conversation went on around him.

“Get off my feet!” called out Dinah, giving her hopeful a thwack on the side of the head that sent him backward on the stomach of Pipkins, awaking the latter gentleman rather more suddenly than was pleasant.

“What the blazes is the matter?” he demanded, shoving the negro from it. “What the deuce you sitting down on me for?”

“She done it,” Cato hastened to reply, pointing to

the indignant cook, who looked as if she would very much like to do it again.

"Is she your parent?" asked Pipkins, as he righted himself, and took the sitting position, "Your honored parent?"

"No—she's my mommy."

"Please present my compliments to your distinguished *mommy*, and request her hereafter not to drop you upon my stomach. It wouldn't be so bad if there was anything in it; but not having tasted any food for something less than a week, you will see there is danger of collapsing my internal machinery."

The negro stared at the speaker in a way which showed he had not the remotest idea of what was meant. Dinah had been shifting her position further to one side, at the imminent risk of upsetting the boat.

"Hold on!" called out Pipkins, as he found his side gradually rising out of the water; "this boat doesn't seem built to travel on one side."

"Who you talkin' 'bout?" demanded Dinah, indignantly.

"If you'd only be kind enough to anchor in the centre of the vessel, we would have but the single danger of the bottom going through. As it is, we have the additional danger of capsizing."

"Ef you'd only talk 'Merican, folks might 'stand wat yer's drivin' at," and the irate cook shrugged her shoulders, and turned, as far as she could, her broad back toward the exquisite, and all the party smiled.

Pipkins looked about him—first at the inmates of the boat, and then at the surroundings. In the forward part sat Mrs. Prescott, with Edith's head resting upon her shoulder, and near her was Lillian, with her head upon the breast of her father. The family were reunited again!

A fearful peril had impended, and was still impending, over their heads; but the great danger had passed, and all were more thankful than words could express to the kind Providence that had indeed brought them through all in such a wonderful manner.

Near the centre of the boat sat Dinah, she having hitched along until the vessel had righted, while her baby was sitting at her feet, within "striking" distance.

Between the parties mentioned Pipkins had stationed himself, in the genuine American attitude, with his feet higher than his head, when he was roused in the manner mentioned.

In the rear were Captain Swarthausen, Fielding and Muggins, the first skillfully guiding the boat, while the latter sat sad and silent, no doubt reflecting upon her who was sleeping her last sleep in the quiet and solemnity of the summer woods. Such meditations we have not the right to intrude upon, and with a sigh of sympathy we leave him to his reveries.

The boat was large, and there was ample room for all. A fine cool breeze was blowing, and were it not for

the horrible fear that threatened them, and for the physical discomfort of hunger which each felt, the ride could not have been more pleasant.

Looking beyond the confines of the boat, Pipkins saw that as they descended the stream it rapidly widened. Brooks and creeks were continually pouring into it, until its volume must have more than doubled in the space of half a dozen miles.

The shores continued deeply wooded, and at this time of the year no scene could have been more enchanting. There were occasional open places, covered with rank green grass, which seemed to be the doors to the vast prairies beyond. Here and there, faintly outlined against the hazy sky, could be seen the blue mountain peaks, some of them in the far distance, looking like conical clouds resting stationary in the summer atmosphere.

It was hard to realize that this was a "land of death"—that the green woods and the plains beyond contained human beings fiercer than the panther, and more merciless than the tiger as it laps the blood of its victim—that the fields, white with harvest, were trampled by the infuriated Sioux as they shot and murdered the inoffensive settlers, and that at that very moment there was wailing and mourning through the land, and cries were uttered for mercy, when there was no mercy to give.

But so it was; for the ten thousandth time since the colonization of this country the wild Indian, with toma-

hawk and torch in hand, was raging through the settlement, visiting upon the innocent a terrible retribution for the sins of the guilty.

Fully two hours had now passed without a sign of danger.

Most of this time old Jud and his canoe were invisible. Now and then he would be detected stealing along under the shore like some strange inhabitant of the deep that was feeling his way back to the sea, and then he sped directly down the centre of the channel, as if courting observation from any who might be along the shore; but all the time he maintained the same distance in advance—the meaning of which was that the river ahead gave no sign of danger.

But where was Red Plume?

This was the question which had been asked repeatedly, and which no one in the party dare undertake to answer with any degree of certainty. The continued absence of the Sioux gave them all the liberty to draw the breath of relief; but, as yet, no one thought of absolute safety.

“Suppose that aboriginal American has had his skull perforated with a bullet by some of his own race,” remarked Pipkins, as the sail-boat skimmed swiftly down the river; “under such circumstances it is hardly to be expected that he will be able to ‘paddle his own canoe.’”

The great fear that was upon all had been hit by the

exquisite in his own peculiar style, but it touched every one.

“Just what I was thinking about,” called out Prescott from the front of the boat. “It would be terrible if such were the case.”

“It would be the phenomenon of the age if such were the case,” replied Captain Swarthausen, speaking with more confidence than he really felt, but still with a sort of general belief of what he said. “He is too great a veteran in the business to be caught in such a mishap as that.”

“But accidents will happen,” was the erudite observation of Pipkins. “I can recall one or two occasions where there is some reason to fear I committed a blunder. Red Plume, I believe, is the name he plumes himself upon,” he added with a triumphant smile, as he looked about to see that his diluted pun was appreciated. “Red Plume no doubt is as skillful and as wide-awake as—myself; but who will pretend that he is exempt from accident? If he is, I will try to insure him in our General Accident Company, for it will be a good thing for Blifkins and the rest of ’em, and perhaps for me also.”

“I don’t believe it,” stoutly asserted Captain Swarthausen, as he shied the boat toward the centre of the stream. “We are all liable to mishaps, but I do not consider it possible that any such thing should happen to him.”

Pipkins became quite earnest and rose to the standing position. He then braced himself and spread out

his arms like an orator, and might have looked like one had he not persisted in keeping his pipe between his teeth.

“You understand, in a matter like this, you must look at both sides of the question, and looking at it thus—”

At this juncture Augustus Pipkins suddenly turned a summerset, fetching up among the Prescott family in the bow, but for whom he would have gone overboard. At the same instant Captain Swarthausen sprang up and lowered the sail. The truth was that the boat had run upon a bar in the river, checking it so suddenly that a man standing up could scarcely have avoided what really happened to the speaker.

The latter, however, was of such a slight build that he was scarcely injured in the least, but hastily scrambled to his feet.

“Thunderation! I’ll bet five to one my pipe is burst. No it isn’t, either,” he added, the next instant, as he turned it over in his hand. “But I say, Captain Swarthausen, didn’t the anchor catch rather sudden like?”

“Sh’d think it did!” groaned Dinah, who had tipped over upon Cato, and had to be assisted back again on her seat. “Never got so shuck up in my life. A little more and it would’ve been the last of poor Dinah.”

“A little more and it would have been the last of us all,” observed Pipkins, as he carefully brushed the dust from his hat. “If you had gone rolling through the

boat it would have been like an elephant turning summersets."

"You'd better shet up," retorted the cook; if you don't I'll fetch you a whack dat'll send dem ar' pipe-stem legs of yourn higher in de air dan dey went afore."

"I apologize for my rudeness," said Pipkins, raising his hat over his head with an exceedingly polite bow.

But the boat was fast; and while this nonsensical badinage was going on, Captain Swarthausen and Prescott were seeking what was necessary to get it off again. It was running so fast at the time of the occurrence that it was stuck immovably, so long as its freight remained the same.

However, in so small a structure, it was evident that there was no great difficulty to be overcome. A shifting of the passengers from the bow to the stern, or perhaps the disembarking of one or two, for a few moments, was all that could be required.

Old Jud was out of sight at the time of the accident, so that they were without his advice or assistance.

The first effort was made by shifting all to the rear of the boat, and then pushing with might and main with the paddle. But this failed.

"We men will have to get out and put our shoulders against it," said Prescott.

"I can suggest a far better plan—an admirable one, in fact"—said Pipkins, as the others made ready to act upon this suggestion.

All listened.

“Our joint weight is about equal to that of this sable angel in the centre; so, instead of a half dozen or so getting out, why not let one do it, and answer for all?”

“How are we going to get her back again?” asked Prescott.

“A sensible question, and one that is unanswerable. I give it up. But Cato here is barefooted (and I think it would ruin any man to furnish the leather for those gunboats, unless he did it by contract). Let him make a beginning.”

“My baby shan’t do no such thing—”

But a word from Prescott was sufficient; and Cato, being nothing loth to display his agility, rolled up his trousers and leaped lightly over the gunwale into the hard earth upon which they were fast.

Then our friends again took their places in the stern, the African applied his shoulder, and the bow was fairly lifted clear. Springing back into the boat, the sail was hoisted and they proceeded hopefully upon their journey.

Pipkins looked longingly down stream.

“I wonder whether that pilot of ours ever becomes sensible to such a thing as hunger. I’ve heard of people who would as lief go a week without eating as not, but I suppose it depends a good deal how a man is brought up. I haven’t trained for that kind of business, and it goes rather tough with me.”

“I think he will make a halt at noon,” remarked Captain Swarthausen.

“Why do you think so?”

“If I ain’t mistaken, he made some such intimation just before we started this morning.

Prescott inclined to think he had heard something like it from the scout, and so they took comfort in the thought.

The hopes and fears of all were awakened by the sight of the scout rowing cautiously back toward them. Fearful that something was wrong, Captain Swarthausen lowered the sail, and slackened the speed as much as was possible, without coming to a dead standstill.

In a moment Jud was alongside.

“Do any of you feel hungry?” he asked, with a manner of perfect simplicity.

There was no ambiguity in the reply, and he hastened to say:

“A half mile down the river is an island; we’ll stop there and have dinner.”

And without another word he shot ahead again.

“Wonder how he’s gwine to gib us dinner,” grunted Dinah, “when he haint got nuffin to gib us dinner wid.”

“There is probably a hotel down on the island, kept on the European plan,” replied Pipkins; “or I should think the native American plan would be the thing in these parts.”

“He must be intending to take a little hunt for game.”

“Or for fish,” suggested Prescott. “At any rate, we can make up our minds that he wouldn’t invite us to dinner unless he had some means of providing it.”

Shortly after, as they rounded another bend in the river, they caught sight of the island—an oval in shape, a few hundred yards in length, and a rod or two in width. The stream sensibly widened at this point, so that there was a goodly breadth of water upon both sides.

The island was sparsely covered with trees and vegetation, and would have been the objective point of any excursion party of the neighborhood, so that the most pleasant prospect was before the party, whose eyes were strained toward the little gem upon the river.

The cravings of nature will tempt a man to brave any danger, and so intent were the fugitives upon satisfying the demands of hunger that not a look was cast behind to see whether they were free from danger.

However, in this instance it made no difference, for had they looked with all their eyes they would have seen nothing to justify the slightest alarm.

They were yet some distance from the upper end, when Pipkins began to snuff the air, turning his head from side to side, with a very knowing look.

“I tell you what, I smell something cooking,” he said, while his eyes sparkled. “There’s mischief or fish brewing.”

Several smiled, believing the speaker was only jesting; fish was wafted to them, and not all the odors from the kitchen; but a moment later the unmistakable odor of cooking "Araby the blest" could have imparted the pleasure that this gave.

There is something peculiarly appetizing in the odor of fish, as distinguished from other food, and it almost maddened the half-famished fugitives as it became more decided, with every foot they advanced nearer the island.

“If you have any bowels of compassion,” said Pipkins, turning toward Captain Swarthausen, “you will not slacken up gradually, but go ahead as fast as you can, until you can’t go any further, and then stop right short.”

But the old veteran had learned prudence, and probably believing Pipkins had received enough of "stopping short," he rounded-to with the cleverness of an experienced navigator, with the boat just resting upon the hard yellow sand of the island, and the party stepped upon *terra firma*, dry shod.

As yet, they had seen nothing of old Jud; but never once did they lose the insidious, delicious odor that filled the air.

“ If that is carried off over the land for any distance, it will wake up every man in the woods, and fetch him this way, bareheaded, on a full run, with his plate before him, yelling for something to eat.”

As may be supposed, Pipkins was at the head, plunging forward like mad, and calling upon the others to follow him.

They were not slow in doing so, for as the magnet draws steel, so did the odor draw them irresistibly toward it.

A few rods through the wood and undergrowth and they came upon a small fire, over which Jud Judkins was leaning, with several goodly-sized fish opened and impaled upon the prongs of a stick.

And beside him, piled upon some large, clean green leaves, what did the furiously hungry party see?

A great cone of the choicest fish, cooked to the perfection of crumbling brownness, with the clear white gleaming through, and the luscious plumpness such as to tempt the daintiest epicure.

There was enough for all, proving that the hunter had prepared some of his food before he turned about and sped up stream to notify the fugitives that an early dinner would be furnished them at this point.

And such a meal—so rich, so delicate, so delicious, so abundant! Never was a dinner more thoroughly enjoyed, and never was a party more benefited by the breaking of their long-enforced fast.

When Augustus Pipkins had eaten until he could eat no more, and then had filled his meerschaum, and touched it off with a match, he expressed himself as “happy.” After awhile he became more mellow, and

affirmed that the special service that Jubal Judkins had rendered the entire party deserved some recognition at their hands.

“ I am undecided as to what it shall be,” said he, as he stood in the centre of the group, with his pipe in his mouth, and his hat in his hand, as though he were preparing to make a stump speech.

“ I thought first of presenting him with a handsome sword—”

“ What in the name of sense would he do with such a weapon? ” demanded Captain Swarthausen, with a laugh.

“ That’s the question I have often asked myself when I have heard of your sword presentations in the army, and I finally gave it up, and thought of a gold medal; but the objection to that is that it costs too much.”

“ Give him a gun or a brace of revolvers, or something like that,” said Prescott, “ and he will appreciate it—that is, if you can get him to accept it.”

“ A very good idea, but these things are deuced expensive,” said the exquisite. “ I had determined that the first handsome silver-mounted revolver I could buy should be presented by Augustus Adolphus Pipkins, unless some one should be thoughtful enough to present him with one before I can do so.”

“ As soon as we reach a place of safety, then,” said the Captain, “ he shall have as fine a brace of pistols as can be found.”

“ And when I get back to the office I will draw up a

set of resolutions, in my best style—that *whereas*, Mr. Jubal Judkins has, etc., etc., therefore be it resolved that the thanks of the undersigned are due, and are hereby tendered, etc.”

In the meantime, the subject of this discussion was occupied in passing around the outer edge of the island. in accordance with his usual cautious manner, and he had no suspicion of what was going on in his absence.

But a half hour later he made his appearance among the group, with the announcement that Red Plume was coming down the river, with a haste which betokened important tidings upon his part.

CHAPTER XXI

LOVE'S LONGINGS

NEVER until now had Lillian Prescott realized how deeply and truly she loved George Havens.

The handsome young officer had interested her at first sight, as any prepossessing young man will interest a young woman when brought in contact with her ; but that interest had grown into a fervent affection such as she had never suspected, until it was brought home to her so vividly by her late experience.

She remembered their first moonlight sail upon Sleeping Water, and the walks and conversations they had had upon the smooth shore of the lake ; she recalled the embarrassment he so frequently displayed in her presence ; his hesitating words, his awkward manner, and his sudden flushing in the face, when she looked in his countenance in her careless way ; his broken sentences, when he sometimes attempted a compliment—his chivalrous devotion to her, which seemed ever longing for some opportunity to prove its sincerity, and the undisguised delight he manifested at the slightest acknowledgment she made of his devotion.

Then she fell to musing upon himself. His modesty prevented her learning more than a very little of him

through his words ; but his uncle, who was justly proud of him, was by no means so reticent.

She had heard him discourse upon his bravery, his magnanimity, his attainments and skill in his profession, and the brilliant future which seemed opening before him. It was his nephew who graduated the first in his class at the Military Academy, and it was he who had immediately entered the service as Colonel, and had already attracted the attention of the authorities above him.

“ I am a captain in the regular army,” said the old officer, “ and I have been thirty years and more reaching it, and it is an honorable position, if I do say it myself. There are few who came from West Point when I did who have lived to claim the title of captain, and I can go in as a general of volunteers whenever I am ready to accept the commission ; but if George lives to see a half dozen years, he will be out of sight of me. That you may depend on.”

Many a girl would have been glad of the love of such a man as Colonel Havens, and more than once Lillian became conscious of a certain pleasure in the admiration of the young officer.

He was manly and chivalrous—one of those lords of creation upon whom a woman can lean for protection, as the weaker does upon the stronger.

Pipkins was a butterfly, a plaything, who was amusing, as a parrot would have been under similar circumstances.

Colonel Havens was thoroughly brave, while cousin Pipkins had only read of such traits, and knew nothing of them from experience.

Indeed, there was no way in which she could compare or contrast these two without manifestly to the advantage of the former.

And yet each looked upon the other as a rival, when such a thing was impossible. It was true that she and Edith entertained a friendship for their cousin, and were glad of his coming, but had he been "the last man on earth," neither could have brought herself to love him.

Ah! what would Lillian not have given could she but recall the last few hours? Why did she treat him with such indifference when her whole heart warmed toward him? Why did she not call to him in a voice which would not have failed to bring him to her side again? Why did she allow him to go, and carry away the misunderstanding, when a word or look from her would have dissipated every cloud?

Then she recalled, with a sinking heart, the assertion of Captain Swarthausen, that Colonel Havens would remain at Fort Grandon but a short time.

"Such men are needed too much elsewhere," said he, "where there is harder work and more danger to encounter."

How probable that she would never see him again! What more likely than that he would go down to the grave all unconscious of the great love she bore for

him? And then, how miserable the fate awaiting her!

So long as father and mother remained in peril, they received the first thoughts and prayers of Lillian Prescott; and when Heaven kindly brought parents and children together, her joy was so great that she was sure she could never be unhappy.

But when the journey was begun down the river, and she sat with her head upon her dear father's shoulder, and the frightful peril grew faint and fainter with each passing moment, then it was that her meditations took the turn we have attempted to outline, and the joyous exhilaration of spirits sank, until it really seemed as if her heart would break.

For a time the tears coursed silently down her cheeks, and her parents believed them the tears of joy; and then, as she mastered her feelings somewhat, something akin to despair settled upon her.

When the party disembarked upon the island, she did so mechanically, and almost unconscious of what she was doing. She ate, as did the rest, for she was weak and needed nourishment for the body.

There was but one in the entire company who suspected her secret, and she was her sister, the noble Edith.

As soon after the conclusion of the meal as it could be done, she drew Lillian away from the others, in the hope of cheering her in her sadness.

"There was a coldness when you parted," said the elder, "and he was offended at some triviality upon

your part, for I know you could not do anything of a serious character to offend him."

"Why did I treat him so rudely?" exclaimed Lillian, covering her face with her hands, and giving vent to her pent-up grief. "He did not deserve it."

"Did he say he would never see you again?"

"No."

"Then he certainly will, if his life is spared; and I do not know as it would make any difference if he declared the other way."

"But I may never see him again?"

"Does it look less likely than it did yesterday that we should ever meet father and mother again?"

"But something tells me I shall not."

"Nothing but Omniscience can tell you that."

"I do not deserve it," said the stricken girl. "I had no business to treat him as I did. He ought not to speak to me again."

"That is one of the strongest reasons in the world why he will do so. I do not deny that you have trifled with him, and acted wrongfully; but cheer up, dearest sister, the future will make it all right."

"Do you believe he loves me?" asked Lillian, with the earnest gaze of a culprit who was about to hear the words that were to decide his fate.

Edith laughed.

"I told you so months ago. Do you think I would have said it unless I knew it to be true?"

"But do you think he does now?"

“ I am sure of it.”

“ I hope so,” added Lillian, with more cheerfulness in her manner; “ but I cannot be sure of it.”

“ Try and dismiss it from your mind, for I cannot bear to see you so sad. Let us return, or our continued absence will excite apprehension.”

Lillian walked toward the camp-fire, where she could hear the merry voices of those who were congregated, and who, to her mind, seemed forgetful that death had been so recently among them, or that they were still liable at any moment to his coming.

They had walked but a few steps, when she suddenly felt Edith's hand tremble in her own, as she started and exclaimed:

“ There he comes!”

Lillian started and looked up, and saw, not Havens, but Fielding!

And she smiled, for in that moment of woe did she not penetrate the secret of her own dear sister?”

The discovery gave her pleasure, and freeing her arm from that of Edith, she walked away with a lighter heart than she had borne for many an hour.

It looked accidental—this meeting between Edith and the Friend. The latter seemed to be wandering about the island in the most natural manner, and the blush upon his unmistakably handsome face perhaps was caused by the unexpected meeting.

It was somewhat singular that Edith, always so self-possessed, showed something of the same confusion in

her manner, and replied to the matter-of-fact observations of Fielding in an abrupt way, that provoked her at her own awkwardness.

Unconsciously, perhaps, Edith's footsteps diverged from the direction she was pursuing at first, and the two strolled further and further away from the camp, until they were at the lowermost extremity of the island, where they paused, and conversed in tones so low that no ears but those for which the words were intended heard them.

Then they wandered slowly back again, as closely together as they could walk, and it seemed for a time that it would be night before they could reach their friends.

Ah! noble Edith Prescott, in watching the affections of thy sister, hast thou not lost thine own? "

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE ISLAND

THE return of Edith Prescott and Fielding to the camp of their friends was simultaneous with the reappearance of Red Plume.

The latter exchanged a few words with Jud, who burst out into uproarious laughter, while the rest looked on as if they did not comprehend what it all meant.

“ You may as well laugh,” said the hunter, turning to them; “ for *them Sioux* ain’t goin’ to disturb us very soon.”

“ Why not? ” inquired Captain Swarthausen.

“ Whiskey! ”

And, overcome at the absurdity of the picture the friendly Indian had given him, Jud laughed more heartily than ever.

It was several minutes before the fugitives comprehended what had really taken place, and then, as may readily be supposed, there was not a little wonder and pleasure expressed at this providential diversion of their enemies.

“ It is just the luckiest thing I ever heard tell on,” said Jud, who seemed to feel a childish delight at the

occurrence. "Red Plume and me just made up our minds this mornin' that there wasn't more than one or two of this party that was ever going to get out of this scrape alive."

"My God! was it as bad as that!" exclaimed Prescott, turning pale at the thought of what they had escaped.

"It was just that," replied Jud, with compressed lips. "What's to save you if they come down the river after us, as we expected they would? We would have had to make a fight for it, and in a scrimmage such as that it is easy enough to tell how it would have ended."

"Then we ought to get down on our knees and thank God!" said Prescott, and all, including the swarthy Sioux, sank upon their knees, and silently returned thanks to Him who had brought them thus far, as He had guided the children of Israel through the wilderness.

But there was none so ignorant or credulous as to believe that they were yet safe. They were many miles from Fort Grandon, the nearest point at which they could feel any immunity from the treacherous Sioux that had now taken the war-path, and seemed actuated by the spirit of demons incarnate as they raged over the settlements of Minnesota.

"Where did they get their whiskey?" inquired Prescott.

"It must have been in the house," replied Captain Swarthausen.

"Dar wan't a drop dar," replied Dinah, "'cept a little in a bottle dat I kept fur de rheumatiz, and I give Cato de last drop ob dat fur de colic dat he said he got last night from bein' 'sposed to de night air too long."

"Yes; he looks as if he was very liable to the colic," remarked Pipkins, surveying the buxom youngster from head to foot. "I think any man that stuffs like him would be apt to die with the worst kind of colic."

"Even if we had had spirituous liquors in the house," replied Prescott, in answer to the remark of Captain Swarthaussen, "it would have been destroyed before they could have lain hands upon it."

"Didst thou say that thou kept no liquor in thy house?" inquired Fielding.

"Not unless it was as Dinah has said."

"Very frequently have I detected the odor of it when Elijah came near me."

"And so have I," added Muggins, speaking for the first time in a long while.

"Golly! dat feller used to get drunk as a cow," said Cato; "hain't I seed 'em stagger and tumble ober de logs?"

"Where did he get it?"

"I neber could find out; I tried to watch him once, and he hit me ober de head wid a log, and I took de hint and left."

"In what form was it?" inquired Prescott, turning toward Jud.

"*Pappose barrel*," replied Red Plume, who was understood to mean a keg.

"That explains a mystery," added Prescott. "A month or two ago I sent Lige down the river to meet the steamboat for a keg of choice Bourbon that I had ordered from St. Paul, and he came back with the excuse that it had been lost off the boat. I thought it was strange, but I did not suspect him."

"He was the guilty one."

"I see how he has hid it, and has now brought it forth to conciliate the Sioux; and it has done us a far greater service than he imagined."

"Didst thou see aught of Pomp?" inquired Fielding, putting the question directly to Red Plume.

"He dead," was the instant reply.

Humble as had been the individual, this sudden announcement of his death caused a shock upon the part of all. It was a vivid reminder of the fiendish disposition of the redskins, and of their malignant cruelty, which made no distinction between the innocent and guilty.

Fielding was seen to turn away his head, and all respected him the more when they saw him brush the moisture from his eyes.

Two of the party had already fallen victims to the Sioux, and a third was in their hands—although the latter individual was not of much account, no matter where he was placed, and indeed the whites were rather relieved at his absence than otherwise.

Neither Red Plume nor Jud had seen anything of danger, either above or below the river, and it was concluded to remain where they were until nightfall, or perhaps until next morning.

This delay would give the party the rest which they so much needed, and would not, so far as they could see, compromise their safety. If they could manage to strike the other river at such a time as to intercept the steamboat, they might be rescued without going near as far as Fort Grandon.

But this proposal had met with a decided refusal from both the scouts—Jud giving as a reason, that in all probability the steamer would not run so far up as the river until the troubles were ended, and they would have their journey for nothing, while there was every probability of their being drawn into greater peril by this diversion from their course.

It was agreed, therefore, to keep on down the river for thirty or forty miles, until they reached Fort Grandon. This course necessitated no disappointment, unless it should occur before they reached there, but they fully understood the point for which they were aiming.

As soon as it was decided to spend the day and night where they were, preparations were made to pass the time as agreeably as possible.

The first consideration, in the eyes of the scouts, was to make the sail-boat, which was now moored at the upper end of the island, invisible. This told its story

rather too plainly to be left in open view to whatever Indians might be wandering through the country.

As there was no means at hand effectually to conceal it, Jud took it over to the other shore, towing it behind his own canoe. Here, by lowering the mast, he managed to draw it under the bank, where the undergrowth was particularly luxuriant, and to secure it in such a manner that there was scarcely a possibility of its being seen by any one going up or down the river, or even upon the bank, unless accident should direct his steps to the very spot where it nestled in the green and exuberant vegetation.

As there were some indications of a storm in the sky, those on shore employed themselves in preparing, as best they could, a shelter for the females. With the aid of the sail and several blankets, a sort of tent was put together, which was deemed sufficient to protect them against any storm which would be likely to rise during the night.

“As for ourselves,” said Captain Swarthausen, referring to the male members of the party, “we must take it in the open air.”

“The night is quite mild, and the shrubbery is dense enough overhead to keep off any superfluous moisture,” replied Prescott.

“Such nights as these are the delight of a soldier, and often enough we have slept out of doors, when there were no trees to keep off the driving snow, and

scarcely a blanket to protect us from it, upon the ground."

"That's what I call carrying picnicking to an extreme," observed Pipkins, as he languidly puffed his meerschaum. "Such exposure is apt to give a man cold and make him anxious for the comforts of home."

"Yes; one night like that would be the end of you," replied Captain Swarthausen, as he surveyed the feminine specimen of a man before him. "I don't think you could ever become used to it."

"That's the reason why I have never tried," was the contented answer.

The rest upon the island was a most refreshing one to the entire band of fugitives. They had all been subjected to such toil and trial that, with a feeling of even temporary safety, came a reaction, and there was not one who did not need sleep.

While the different ones disposed of themselves as fancy dictated, Jud and Red Plume made a tour of the island. The former had told his friends to sleep while they had the opportunity, and he would alternate with the Sioux during the night, provided it looked safe to do so.

Veteran scouts as these two men were, and similar as were their tastes and judgments, a casual observer would have seen at once that there was some point of difference between them. Their views were dissimilar upon some point which concerned the safety of the company.

It was apparently a slight difference; but, when the consequences of a mistake in the wrong direction are considered, it will be seen how vitally it concerned our friends, who, in all their dreamings, did not dream of any such thing entering the heads of their guardians.

Red Plume believed that they were still in danger from the Sioux along the lake. True, there was not a strong probability of these drunken savages starting in pursuit of an enemy just then; but it was probable that they would be in a condition to do so by nightfall, for the simple reason that their whiskey could not hold out much longer; and after a debauch of this kind they would be in as vindictive and merciless a temper as it is possible for a degraded redskin to be.

Old Jud saw no danger at all. If the Sioux should regain enough of their senses to be able to pursue them, they would regain enough sense, also, to see the uselessness of it, when there would be every reason to believe that the whites were far beyond their reach, even before they could start after them.

The dusky scout was not given to argument, and when he found how opinionated his white companion was, he ceased to dispute, and signified his acquiescence in his views; but Jud saw plainly enough that it was one of those things which was done purely for peace sake.

This conclusion was hardly reached when Red Plume pointed to the eastern shore, a short distance up

stream, uttering an exclamation of displeasure at the same time.

That which he saw was the same sign that met the eye of the Otter and Colonel Havens in ascending the stream the day before—that is, the smoke of a camp-fire ascending through the tops of the trees.

“Dar Injin,” remarked Red Plume, in his broken English.

“Yes, and there, too,” replied the scout, pointing down the river, but on the opposite side, where a similar sight was observed.

This, then, was proof that they were in a neighborhood of great danger, and it looked as though it was a prudent thing to halt when and where they did.

Old Jud looked significantly toward his dusky friend, and smiled, but that stolid face was as inexpressive as a stone, and gave no indication of what were the thoughts of the Indian.

If the night was to be spent here, it was necessary that some provision should be made, as only fragments of the fishes remained. There was no good place in the immediate vicinity of the island to fish, so Jud entered his canoe, and pulled for the other shore, where he had met with such abundant good fortune during the afternoon.

This left Red Plume with the duty of watching and protecting the entire island; but he felt fully competent to do so, at least during the day, when he was able to scan every approach with his eagle eye, and communi-

cate with Jud, who was within easy signalling distance.

The sky, by this time, was overcast with clouds, and there was every appearance of an approaching storm. Faint rumbling thunder was heard in the distance, accompanied by occasional flashes of lightning, and a cool wind swayed the forest trees, and wrinkled the surface of the river.

The storm, however, passed off to the northward, only a few drops falling upon the island, while it raged, with great fierceness a few miles up the river.

Old Jud saw a fortunate turn of affairs in this, as such a turmoil in the woods would be pretty certain to obliterate all signs of the trail which had been left along the margin of the lake, and compel the Sioux, in case they should think of pursuing, to go it blind more decidedly than ever.

Any one who understood the nature of Red Plume would have seen, on the instant, that he was far from being satisfied with the shape matters had taken. He walked back and forth, in and out among the trees, first appearing at the upper and then at the lower end of the island, and scanning every portion of the shore that was visible.

The long summer afternoon gradually wore away, and still every one of the fugitives slept soundly, showing how necessary, in one sense at least, it was that the rest should have been obtained for them.

Just as the sun was setting, the canoe of Jud put out

in the river, and rapidly approached the island. As the scout drew his boat up the bank, he revealed a fine pile of fish which by some legerdemain, he had inveigled from the water into the boat.

About this time, also, there was a general awaking up of the party, and a universal sense of hunger among them all.

Old Jud having given some hints to Dinah of the process by which he had prepared the fish, it was left to her, while the others busied themselves as they chose.

Most of them took to wandering over the island, in the best of spirits, which were dampened, however, somewhat, by Jud stating to them that it was the wish of Red Plume that they should expose themselves as little as possible to view from the shore.

When asked for an explanation of this request, he simply replied that it was the wish of the Sioux, who would not have made such a request unless there was reason for it, and the best thing they could do was to obey it.

To several of the men, Jud explained that there were Indians at no great distance, and an unfortunate disclosure of the presence of the whites upon the island would be very likely to bring on a collision.

"Dat's what I tink," said Cato, who was listening, open-mouthed, to these words; "dar's Injuns 'bout yer, 'cause I seed 'em."

"Where did you see them?" inquired Prescott, in no little surprise.

"When I was down at de lower end de island; I was lookin' 'bout; I seed 'leven Injuns in one boat a rowin' 'cross de riber."

"When?"

"'Bout half an hour ago."

"You were asleep then," said Captain Swarthausen.

The negro scratched his head, as if he were undecided regarding that matter. Finally, his face lit as he looked up.

"Dat be so; I dreamed it suah."

"Shouldn't wonder ef you seen it afore you see daylight agin," remarked Jud, in a voice which showed he was in earnest.

"Are there no settlements in this neighborhood?" inquired Fielding.

"There ain't exactly what you call settlements," he replied, "but there are houses scattered here and there, and they're the ones that be catching it. Them's the kind of enemies the Sioux like to pounce down upon."

"Suppose they should attack us upon the island, have we much chance of defending ourselves?" inquired Prescott.

"If they don't come too fast. You see they'd have to come over the water, while we'd have the shelter of the trees; and that's just the way the redskins don't like to have matters fixed."

"They would not be likely to make an open attack?"

“Not as long as there was any other chance. You see how they worked it along the lake.”

“There’s one thing certain,” laughed Captain Swarthaussen, “we ain’t as likely to be burned out as we were there.”

“That is what I call fortunate,” remarked Pipkins; “there’s only one danger that I foresee, in case the aborigines should find out we were picnicking here, and decide to molest us.”

All looked inquiringly at the young man for his explanation of what he feared.

“Finding we have intrenched ourselves here, they may throw up a dam across the water above and shut the water off.”

“How will that benefit them?”

“Then they can march upon us overland, just as your soldiers charge upon a fort or embankment.”

Pipkins seemed so earnest in what he said, that more than one laughed, especially Captain Swarthaussen, who declared that he was born for a general.

“That’s what I’ve been told before, and if it wasn’t for my confounded modesty I would have been a general by this time—hello!—hark!”

Every one started, for at that moment they heard the faint discharge of guns, as if two parties were encountering each other.

“Is that up or down the river?” asked Prescott.

“It’s off here,” replied the Captain, pointing to the right.

"That's up the river," added Jud; "the way the stream winds round and round."

"What's the meaning of it?"

The scout shook his head.

"That's more than I kin tell; I don't know as I ever heerd them guns afore, else I might tell you who fired 'em."

"It confirms what you have said, at any rate, that the Sioux are on every side of us."

"Do you think," asked Captain Swarthausen, "that it was our wisest plan to halt here for the night?"

Jud hesitated a moment before replying.

"I don't know how to answer that 'ere question till we've got through this muss, and found out what we've had to go through. Red Plume, I may as well tell you, was opposed to our stayin' here till morning."

"Why so?"

"Wall, it's hard to tell; but I think he's changed his mind, and concluded that it was the best thing we could do."

"Is it better to go at night or daytime?"

"From the way things look, it's better to take the day for it. You see there's enough moon to show the white sail to both sides the shore, and there would be some redskins that would be sure to see it."

"Hardly as likely to do so, as during the day."

"Just so; but in the day time we'd have a chance of seein' where we was runnin', and be ready to sar-cumvent any trick of the rascals."

The conversation suddenly ceased, for the report of guns was again heard, and all listened with great interest.

It was just growing dusk, and there was scarcely a breath of air stirring the leaves, so that a slight sound could be heard at a great distance, even when obstructed by the woods. The splash of a small fish that sprang above the surface, at a long distance up stream, was heard as plainly as if it were within a rod or two of where they stood.

Old Jud was of an opinion that the guns which they heard, were about a mile off, which was twice as far as any of the others had supposed.

“There be farm houses here and there,” he added, “and there’s no tellin’ what this means. It may be some of the settlers fighting for their lives. I will see what Red Plume thinks of it.”

He walked away, and when at the end of a few minutes he returned, all noticed the serious expression of his countenance.

“The redskin says it comes from the varmints and settlers fightin’, and he b’leves they’ve found out we be here.”

“Good heavens! what ‘don’t they find out!” exclaimed Mr. Prescott, not a little alarmed at this astounding intelligence “Are we never to be safe?”

“Not as long as we stay in this outlandish country. I tell you, you folks don’t know what a general cleaning out these infarnal varmints are making. Ef we

don't get into Fort Grandon afore long, it's my 'pinion we'll never get there at all."

The altered manner of the scout impressed all, and threw quite a chill over the good feelings which had hitherto prevailed.

"Did Red Plume give his reason for thinking the heathen knew we were here?" inquired Fielding.

"No; I s'pose he hasn't got any partic'lar reason; but he's been looking around powerful sharp since we've been here, and has come to his 'clusion on general principles, I think."

"Then there is a possibility of his being mistaken?" added the Friend.

"I s'pose he might be, but the safest way in a thing like this, is to think he ain't."

Further conversation was interrupted by Dinah shouting in a voice that certainly must have penetrated a mile:

"Suppah's ready, and ef you folks don't come purty quick, my baby will eat eberyting dar is fur you!"

This produced a panic, and in a very brief space of time, the fugitives were gathered around the pile of fish, and eating with as keen appetites, almost, as marked their first meal upon the island.

The fire had been kindled among the trees where the surrounding vegetation was dense enough to prevent its attracting attention from the shore. This place had been intentionally selected on this account, when the first fire was started by old Jud himself.

The island itself, especially the upper portion was covered with a large quantity of drift-wood, brought down during many a previous freshet, and this made the best of fuel for the purpose for which it was used.

It was observed by all, that Red Plume displayed a capacity for holding food, which, to say the least, was amazing.

“Don’t think he’s eat a mouthful for two days,” remarked Jud, by way of explanation, “and he would go longer yet without sayin’ a word, ef it didn’t happen to be handy.”

“It’s a gift,” said Pipkins, who was not a great ways behind the savage in his appetite; “he and I are a good deal alike.”

“How do you make that out?” inquired Prescott.

“Why don’t you see what capabilities we have in the gastronomic line?”

“But you have not abstained as long as he.”

“There’s where the slight difference comes in; we are like and unlike, you see. I don’t require the time to develop my power in that direction; still, the power itself is very similar in both cases.”

And Pipkins laughed, as if certain that he had said something extremely funny.

Lillian, Edith, and her mother, were quite reserved, and evidently did not participate in the hilarity of spirits displayed by several of the others.

The great loss which Muggins had suffered was continually manifest in his action and appearance. He

had not been seen to smile since he had learned the sad news.

Naturally of a genial disposition, this was all the more noticeable, and he had the sympathy of all, including Pipkins himself, who was not without a certain kindness of heart, in spite of the triviality he displayed so continually.

The storm which had impended some hours before, had now entirely disappeared, and the sky was almost entirely clear of clouds. The light of the moon was unobstructed, and the night was to be a fairer one than the preceding.

The fugitives were now so thoroughly rested, that there was some thought of resuming their journey, as soon as darkness was fairly settled upon them, but Red Plume and Jud agreed that probably nothing would be gained by it. There was no island for many miles that offered such a good place of refuge as this, and it was no more than prudent to refuse to leave it, until they understood the bearings of the land before them.

Furthermore, there was strong reason to believe that the Indians had discovered the presence of the whites upon the island, and would attempt a reconnoissance of it before venturing upon an attack.

Quite late in the evening, after the females had retired to their tent, the sentinels were placed. Fielding took the upper end of the island, Muggins the lower, Prescott one side and Pipkins the other, while old Jud took upon himself the office of general-in-chief, or

superintendent, it being his purpose to walk around and see that each man did his duty.

Red Plume consented to take the rest which his iron frame needed; for many an hour had passed since he had closed his eyes in sleep, or had given even his strained faculties a few minutes' rest.

So he folded his blanket around him, and lay down beneath one of the trees, where he could be easily reached by a signal from Jud, and here he immediately sank into that profound sleep characteristic of the Indian race.

Jud impressed upon each man the necessity of his keeping thoroughly wide awake, and each very naturally intended to do so; Pipkins lighting his meerschauum by way of assisting him in the matter.

"If you want to go to sleep, smoke your pipe," said he, as he adjusted himself in position; "if you want to keep awake, smoke your pipe; that constitutes what I call the *nicotine paradox*," he added, as he gave an enormous whiff. "I say, Jud, if I see one of the noble red men of the woods endeavoring to steal upon this delightful island, I am to shoot him, ain't I?"

"Yes."

"Unless he gives the countersign, I suppose. What is that?"

"You may pick out your own countersign," laughed the scout, somewhat amused at the eccentricities of the young exquisite.

"*'E pluribus unum*,' then, is the word," said he;

“ just instruct the others on that point, and tell them that it must be uttered in pure English, and not in the Sioux tongue.”

“ Did you ever shoot a man? ” inquired Jud.

“ Never but once, and then it turned out to be a mule that somebody had killed before me, I never scalped an Indian—that’s certain. ”

“ You needn’t take the trouble to raise the hair of any you might see to-night; but the minute you’re sure it’s a redskin, blaze away. ”

“ All right; I comprehend your instructions. ”

With which Pipkins resumed his pipe and passed on.

Muggins, although generally of little account, was sure to be reliable in any emergency to-night. He was silent and thoughtful, and would doubtless be glad of an opportunity, although, in a slight degree, to repay the merciless redskins for the terrible affliction they had brought upon him.

He quietly promised an obedience to the commands of the scout, who gave him but little instruction, and passed on to Fielding.

Here there was even less yet said. The Friend had learned an amazing lot within the last week or two, and especially within the preceding twenty-four hours, and the hunter had the good taste not to say too much to him.

Prescott was quite apprehensive, and it will be admitted that he had a good cause. His residence in Minnesota had been extended enough to give him an

idea of the frightful atrocities of which the redskins were capable, and, when it is remembered that he had his wife and two children with him, it would have been unnatural had he been indifferent to the situation.

“Have you any suspicion of the manner in which they will attack us?” he inquired of Jud.

“Dunno as they will do it at all.”

“I know; we all hope they won’t; but, provided they do, in what shape may we expect them?”

“Some of ’em will come sneakin’ around at first, to find out whether we’re on the look-out for them or not. You won’t have any trouble in seein’ them, ’cause, as I said, they won’t take extra pains to hide themselves—but it’s them that come afterward, when they feel like ’tending to business.”

“And how shall we look for them? Although, I suppose, that if we are sharp enough to keep up a good watch, there is no fear but that we shall see them.”

“No; you know as much ’bout that as I do.”

Having stationed and instructed them all, the scout began his rounds, making it a point to come upon the sentinels in such silence as to prevent their “trimming,” and putting on a vigilance, which was not a fair criterion of their diligence.

Fielding, as a matter of course, was wide awake, and as keenly alert as a veteran mountaineer could have been, so the scout passed on without letting him know of his presence. Muggins was silent and watchful, as

was Prescott, and Jud quietly went by them all, without permitting them to be aware of his proximity.

Pipkins was sitting on the ground leaning against a tree, and very silent—so silent, indeed, that the scout approached closer, and looked in his face.

As he expected, he was sound asleep!

To test his watchfulness, Jud tramped about him several times, and even stumbled over him, but he slept on; and he finally left him as he was, unwilling to disturb the slumber that must be so refreshing.

He had moved but a few steps, when a signal from Fielding drew him in that direction. The next moment he was at his side.

“If I am not greatly mistaken,” said the Quaker, “yonder is a boat passing down stream, at about an equal distance from the island and yonder shore.”

Ere the deliberately speaking young man had finished his sentence, Jud was looking sharply in the direction indicated. He saw distinctly a large boat floating downward with the current.

“Yes; yonder goes a boat,” he replied, after a moment’s scrutiny, “and what’s more, *it’s ours*—the very sail boat I pulled under the bank.”

“It may have floated free—”

“Not a bit of it—there be Injins in it!”

CHAPTER XXIII

“MANOEUVRING FOR POSITION”

THIS was not a very pleasant discovery to make, looking at the simple theft itself, or its signification of the proximity of the Indians.

The boat could be plainly seen as it floated down stream, and the fact that it went neither faster nor slower than the current, caused the belief of Fielding that it had merely drifted loose.

“It’s all a trick,” said Jud; “it’s done on purpose to make us think that.”

“Dost thou think there is a heathen in it?”

“I don’t see any; but if there ain’t any inside, they’re watchin’ ’long shore, in the hope that some of us will go out to pick it up.”

“And must we lose the boat? Verily, we can ill suffer such a loss.”

“We can’t stop it just now; I’ll go down to the t’other end the island, and see what I kin see.”

Upon reaching the lowest point of the land upon which they were camped, the scout admonished Muggins to keep invisible and remain quiet; and then, lying flat upon the ground, he carefully scrutinized the boat as it floated away from him.

By placing himself as low down as possible, the scout hoped to bring the gunwales of the boat against the clear sky beyond, but found it could not be done for a few moments, as the dark back-ground of trees, on the other shore, interposed and prevented.

But as the vessel drifted downward, it passed away from this bank of shadow, and got below Jud, so that it stood out upon the surface of the water, with nothing but the river itself in the back-ground beyond.

However, by this time it was so far away, that it could not be seen with very great distinctness; but, scanning it as intently as possible, the hunter fancied he saw the head of an Indian moving along the gunwale, as if he were stealthily changing his position.

His supposition upon this ground was strengthened by noticing a change in the course of the boat. Instead of keeping on down the river in the direct line it had been following during the last few minutes, it was diverted toward the bank which it had previously left, and continued steadily nearing it, until, as it was about fading out in the distance, it mingled with the gloom of the overhanging undergrowth, and, although it had vanished from view, Jud was certain that it was at rest.

The fact that it had gone out from the shore and returned to it at a point lower down, was proof enough that human agency was concerned in the business; but the hunter was somewhat puzzled to understand how the boat had been discovered by the savages.

True, it might have happened by accident, but it was so unlikely, that he was forced to conclude that he must have been watched at the time he concealed it himself, and thus, without knowing it, he had been in the power of the redskins, who could have shot him at any moment while he was engaged in fishing.

Jud conjectured that his enemies, knowing as they did that the island would be guarded by sentinels, hoped to draw one or two of them in pursuit, and thus uncover the approach to the fugitives, and give the Sioux the coveted opportunity of stealing upon them unawares in the night.

With this explanation, the prudence of Jud will be appreciated in not venturing out after the boat. Unquestionable as was the ability of our friends to make a good defence, there were none of them at all anxious to bring on an encounter with their treacherous enemies.

Still, the hunter was not disposed quietly to give up their property, which was so indispensable to his companions in continuing their flight down the river. With only the two small canoes at their command, it was impossible to carry more than half the company.

He was confident that, for the present, at least, the boat would not be taken any great distance, and, when he was prepared to manœuvre for its recovery, he was confident that he knew where to look for it. Until then he could wait on more important matters.

“If you see anything more,” said Jud to Muggins, “jist give a low whistle, like, and I will be here.”

With this, he started toward the upper end of the island, passing on his way Augustus Pipkins, who, as might be supposed, was still sound asleep. Placing his arm upon his shoulder, he was forced to shake him quite roughly before he could induce him to open his eyes.

“I’m afeared you’ll catch cold,” remarked the hunter; “hadn’t you better put your blanket over you?”

Pipkins rubbed his eyes for some time, before he succeeded in thoroughly awaking, but his self-possession did not forsake him.

“You see, I knew there wouldn’t be any danger before midnight, so I thought I would prepare myself by taking a little nap between now and then.”

“But I tell you, there is danger all the time; as much now as at any time.”

“Indeed! is it possible? Why didn’t you tell me that in the first place. I am glad you have mentioned it, for now I will remember it.”

“I hope you will,” said Jud, as he changed his mind, and walked back toward Muggins.

It was about this time that Fielding, who was as wide awake as a weasel, was startled by hearing a slight ripple of the water, close to where he was standing beside a tree, which sounded differently from the usual wash of the current against the sand.

Knowing the insidious nature of the redskins, he

carefully took a step or two forward and peered into the water.

He possessed a keen vision, and he used it to the best of his ability, but could discern nothing out of the usual order of things, and, after a minute or so, he stepped back again, with his suspicions partly but not entirely disarmed.

Some little time passed when precisely the same sound was heard, and he again advanced and looked out, but with no better success than before.

“It may be that the storm of a few hours ago has raised the river somewhat, and the increasing volume is what I hear upon the beach,” he reflected, as he stepped back to his place once more.

But at this juncture he observed a slight swaying of the bushes along the shore, and immediately after, became certain that an Indian, on his hands and knees, was stealing toward him.

The Quaker stepped back and concealed himself behind the tree. The next second he saw the Sioux slowly rise to a crouching position, and look searchingly around in the darkness.

He held this bent attitude for quite a time, not only looking but listening, while Fielding never once took his eyes from him.

Strange emotions agitated the Friend. He very well knew that any other member of the party placed in his position would not hesitate to fire.

By his side was his loaded rifle, and, in a twinkling,

he could bring it to his shoulder and send a bullet through the brain or heart of the daring redskin, who was less than a dozen feet away. But all through the frightful experiences of the last day or two, he had not knowingly killed a person, although he had some misgivings as to the ultimate fate of the individual, whom, it will be remembered, he assisted off the roof he was seeking to fire.

And although he was strongly tempted to shoot this miscreant, whose only object was evil, in coming upon the island in this manner, yet his nature revolted. He grasped the rifle at his side with a firm grasp, but he made no movement to bring it to a level with his enemy before him.

“Verily, I will defend myself if he leap upon me,” he reflected; “but I cannot bring myself to strike the first blow.”

It looked very much as if he who struck the first blow would strike the only one, as that would probably be an extinguisher, and he was not exactly confident that he would stand still, even, and patiently receive this infliction.

By this time the Indian had assumed the upright position, and stood erect, turning his head from side to side, disposed cautiously to feel every inch of his way as he advanced into the wood, where he knew his hereditary enemies were partly sleeping and partly standing guard.

As he stood with his whole figure outlined, he dis-

covered a form of peerless symmetry, and a man who would make a most desperate antagonist in a hand-to-hand encounter. Indeed, the iron-limbed scout would have carefully measured such a foe before grappling with him.

But it was not fear that held Fielding motionless. It was the teachings of his life, which would not allow him to advance to the assault of the savage even though he knew he was coming with murder in his heart.

Several times he was upon the point of signalling to Jud to come to the scene; but cautiously as he might make the call, there would be no concealing it from the ears of the Sioux, who was evidently listening for just such a warning from whomsoever might be stationed nearest him.

Then Fielding was momentarily expecting the coming of the scout. Had the latter indeed proceeded to the upper part of the island, as he intended when he first left Muggins, he would have reached this spot at the very moment the Indian displayed himself.

But the savage having waited several minutes, began moving forward, keeping close to the shore, however, and occasionally sinking down, so that for a short time he was lost entirely to view.

Great as was the repugnance of Fielding to actual war, he could not consent to allow this miscreant to approach the sleeping ones in the centre of the wood, and he therefore began walking along parallel with the

Indian, and keeping himself between him and the camp.

The extreme caution with which the Sioux stole his way along the shore, made it quite an easy task to maintain an equal pace with him, and to interpose against any sudden advance upon the part of the savage.

Half the length of the island was passed, when the savage suddenly vanished from sight. Fielding waited a moment for him to reappear, but seeing nothing of him, he supposed he had gone further down before rising to the upright position, and he therefore moved a rod or so down himself.

But still the Sioux remained invisible, and fearful of being outwitted, the Friend hastily stepped to the edge of the river, reaching it just in time to catch a glimpse of the head of the Indian, as he swam swiftly toward the main land.

At the same moment, a rustling behind him caught his ear, and turning his head he saw old Jud in the act of raising his rifle.

“Hold!” said Fielding, as he pushed the barrel aside; “he has harmed no one—why harm him?”

The hunter lowered his piece with a laugh.

“Ef any other man but you done that I’d shoot him; but you’re a plucky dog, if you are a Quaker. You proved that last night; but my principles is, whenever you see a redskin, shoot him.”

“And therein has great evil been done the red man,

friend Jubal; for such a course must frequently strike the innocent as well as the guilty."

"I don't believe there be any such things as innocent Ingins," doggedly returned the scout; "they may put it on afore your face, but they will stab you to the heart when your back is turned."

"What thinkest thou of Red Plume?"

This was an *argumentum ad hominem*, and took the hunter all aback for a moment.

"I look upon him as a white man anyway."

"Ah! friend Jubal, thou canst not get over the difficulty in that way; Red Plume is as much an Indian as is he who just now fled the island, yet one is thy friend, and the other thine enemy."

"And you wouldn't let me hurt either one of 'em."

"Because it was not necessary."

"Suppose you should see him leanin' over—wal, say Edith Prescott—with his tomahawk raised ready to strike, and you stood as you do, with your loaded rifle in your hand—what then?"

"I pray thee, Jubal, not to force me to answer. I am a weak, erring man, and the voice of conscience is not followed as frequently as it should be."

The scout laughed again, for it was evident he was pleased with the Quaker, who was indeed a noble and courageous young man.

"Ah! you'll do," he exclaimed, slapping him on the shoulder; "I ain't afeard to trust you alone. I think you would be apt to strike rather powerful like, if some

of the varmints should press you agin the wall. But tell me where you first seed this redskin that you love so much."

Fielding related what is already known to our readers, Jud listening attentively in the meantime, and smiling in his quiet way, when the Friend told how he had managed to keep between the party and the savage.

"Lest the heathen should steal upon them un-awares."

"Ef you don't want to go into the scalping business," said Jud, "just whistle to me, and I'll take it off your hands."

Going to the upper end of the island where he had hid his canoe, the scout entered it, and paddled close along shore in the direction of the point where Pipkins had been stationed as a sentinel.

His intention was to give the young man a thorough test of his watchfulness, and in case he failed, as he expected he would do, he would withdraw him and assume his place himself, first calling upon Red Plume to take upon himself the office of general superintendent.

The truth was, Jud began to feel that matters were getting too serious to permit any trifling.

The water directly in front of Pipkins was quite deep, and the hunter purposely made quite a plashing with his paddle.

Not a little surprised, therefore, was he, when he saw a man standing upright with his rifle in hand, who called out,

“ Who goes there? ”

The hunter made no reply, but continued moving slowly along, quite surprised at the watchfulness of the young exquisite.

“ Give the countersign—hello! you came near getting shot,” laughed Pipkins, as he recognized his friend.

Jud complimented him on his vigilance, and instructing him to keep it up, he left his canoe secured against the bank, and crossed the island to sit awhile with Prescott.

“ I think I have risen above the boiling point in the thermometer of Jud’s estimation,” remarked Pipkins, when he found himself alone again. “ I have demonstrated my watchfulness beyond all dispute.”

As a preventive against drowsiness, which seemed constantly creeping upon him, he had cleared away a small path, back and forth which he was walking at the moment he discovered the boat and its occupant.

He now kept this up for some time, but although he had his meerschaum to smoke, he still found it rather monotonous work, and again sat down upon the ground.

“ All it wants is *will*,” he reflected; “ anybody could keep awake a week, if he had a strong enough will; but I think it would be deuced unpleasant. I am going to prove it’s the easiest thing in the world to sit down on the ground and keep a faithful guard all the time.”

For a time it was very pleasant (as he had quite ex-

hausted himself from so much walking), to sit thus and smoke his pipe; but in spite of the Herculean will upon which he had prided himself, he became sensible of a sleepy feeling gradually stealing over him.

"It beats thunder!" he finally exclaimed, impatiently, as he made a desperate effort to rouse up. "I ought to sleep a month before I undertake this business. Hello! that's queer!"

This exclamation was caused by observing that the canoe left by Jud had shifted its position, and was gradually drifting free. Springing forward, he arrested it just in time to prevent its floating away altogether.

"It must be that the river is rising," concluded the sentinel, as he replaced it in position, and took his seat again.

Everything went along pleasantly for awhile, the night being just cool enough to make it pleasant to sit in the shadow of the wood.

But nothing of which he could think could prevent the insidious approach of sleep, and he was relapsing into unconsciousness again, when he was aroused by a soft, grating noise upon the sand, and he looked up just in time to see the canoe slowly sliding off the shingle into the water.

Pipkins was fairly frightened, and he stood almost speechless with amazement.

But next moment a doubt entered his mind. He could not be certain that the boat had changed its posi-

tion in the least, nor could it be seen to stir as he gazed wonderingly at it.

“Wonder if I was dreaming?—no, I couldn’t have been dreaming, as I wasn’t asleep. I must have imagined it, or heard something else, and confused them in my mind.”

A footstep caused him to turn his head, expecting to see a wild Indian at his elbow, but to his delight he encountered the pleasant face of Jud Judkins, the scout.

“Well, you didn’t catch me asleep this time?” said Pipkins, with a laugh.

“No; you’ll make a tol’ble sentinel after a little practice.”

“How much practice would you say?”

“Wal, some thirty or forty years; perhaps not quite so long. Anything new since I was here?”

Pipkins was on the point of explaining his dilemma, but he was fearful of the ridicule of the hunter, so he simply asked the question:

“That canoe is just as you left it, isn’t it?”

The scout surveyed it a moment, and then answered:

“I don’t notice any difference. What did you ax fur?”

“Oh, nothing.”

Jud eyed him sharply, but did not question him further; and admonishing him not to relax his vigilance for a moment, he moved away again.

It was now quite late in the evening, and Red Plume had secured several hours of profound rest, enough, as

Jud well knew, to suffice for several days; so he felt no hesitation in going to him and touching his shoulder, the Indian awakening on the instant.

Only a word or two was exchanged, when old Jud passed on, and the Indian rose to his feet.

Left alone to himself once more, Pipkins did his utmost to keep his senses bright and keen; but as it was now near midnight, and he had smoked till he was tired, and had nothing further with which to amuse himself, he could not resist the somnolence which speedily came upon him.

Ere he was aware, his head was nodding again, and when he suddenly aroused himself, it was just in time to see the mysterious canoe slide off into the water, and begin moving down stream with the current, and seemingly at a swifter rate than the river could have carried it itself.

“By jingo! if that don’t beat everything!” he exclaimed, making a dash at it, but it was already too far to be reached with the hand, and he stepped into the water; but the rapidly increasing depth warned him of his danger, and he hastily withdrew.

Still the boat was drifting further and further away, and not knowing what to do, the remiss sentinel caught up his rifle, and began following it along the shore, not, as yet, deeming it best (or, in fact, not thinking of it) to signal to Jud to come to his assistance.

A rod or so was passed in this manner, when Pipkins was more bewildered than ever by seeing an In-

dian step into the water, directly in front of him, and begin swimming toward the stern of the boat.

"I'll be blowed if I don't fetch *you!*" he muttered, as he drew his piece to his shoulder, took deliberate aim, and pulled the trigger.

The almost noiseless click of the lock warned him that something was the matter, and then the sentinel suddenly recollected.

"Just my luck! the gun ain't loaded, and hasn't been loaded all the evening! Ain't I been in a fine condition to shoot somebody?"

Whereupon he began reloading his piece, and before it was half done nothing more could be seen of the Indian.

Provided Pipkins's piece had been loaded, and he had taken a true aim, his bullet would have penetrated the skull of the friendly Sioux, Red Plume.

This redskin had comprehended the stratagem of their enemies, and reached the shore just as the canoe came abreast. He recognized the head of an Indian in the water, at the bow, towing it, and the instant the boat shut off his view, he noiselessly entered the water, and struck out for it.

With the skill which he possessed in swimming, a few strokes only were necessary to carry him over the intervening space, and reaching up his hand, he allowed it to rest upon the gunwale, while he floated with the current.

Red Plume could tell by the sensation of the water

against his limbs and body that they were not merely drifting with the stream, but that the redskin at the bow was towing it quite vigorously. This was also perceptible by a peculiar pulsation of the boat caused by the strokes of the swimmer.

It was not a part of the plan of Red Plume to allow himself to be drawn thus unresistingly into the snares of the Sioux, who would be delighted at gaining such a prize as he. Pleasant as it was to "float with the current," such a course could only result in death to him; and when he plunged into the river, and started in pursuit of the runaway boat, it was with the intention of bringing on a collision with the thief as speedily as could be done with safety to himself.

It was not probable that as yet the pilot of the canoe was aware of the passenger he had in tow, so that the advantage was greatly with the latter, who silently drew his knife from his belt and placed it between his teeth.

He was on the point of moving along the side of the boat to attack his foe, when the acute perception of Red Plume told him that the savage was doing the same thing, and was advancing toward him. The pulsating, onward motion of the canoe had ceased, and he could detect the faintest rustling of the water which told him of the exact locality of his enemy.

When only a foot or two separated them, Red Plume took his knife in his right hand, and awaited the approach of his antagonist.

At this instant, the feet of the latter struck the legs of the former, and immediately after his head came around the stern of the canoe, with a scared look, which showed how unprepared he was for such a meeting.

Red Plume gave him no time to recover himself, and in less time than we have taken to describe the meeting, the thief sank under the water, with not a spark of life in him.

When totally lifeless, he was caught and held for a moment with his head above water. This was done in order that his victor might scan his face and features, and ascertain whether it was possible to assume his place during the next hour or two.

Concluding that the risk might be taken, he deliberately scalped the savage, and then allowed him to disappear in the river, while he began carefully reconnoitering his situation.

Scanning both sides of the river, he could see nothing but the dark shores, and the solemn trees, all silent as the tomb. No star-like point of light showed where the camp-fire was burning, nor did any of those numerous bird-like signals betray the presence of the prowling scout.

Jud had told him of the abstraction of the larger boat, but had not said to which side of the river it had been taken, so that it was left almost entirely to conjecture.

After carefully cogitating upon the matter, he concluded that it was the right shore, and his shrewdness

was further proved by his hitting almost the precise spot where it was nestling at that very moment.

Having fixed his own landmarks, Red Plume began working the boat in toward land, and soon came so near that he discerned several dark forms moving stealthily along the banks.

At the same moment one or two low whistles were exchanged, doubtless intended to guide the one who had the canoe.

All this proved that the return of the Sioux was expected, and that Red Plume had a delicately dangerous task before him of personating the individual whom he had slain, as in all probability he would be subjected to a rigid examination, and, in case of suspicion, to a searching scrutiny by those who were awaiting him along the shore.

Still, he did not hesitate, and a moment later, as his feet touched bottom, he walked boldly out among the Indians, where, for the present, we must leave him.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VALE OF SHADOWS

WHILE the events just narrated were taking place, an equally interesting incident engaged the attention of the sentinels upon the island.

At the very moment that Red Plume landed, Fielding, who still remained at his station upon the northern extremity, caught sight of a canoe that put out from the other shore, and headed straight toward the point where he was standing.

The moment he made sure that it was aiming toward him, he foresaw the probability of an encounter, and, as instructed, signalled to Jud, who was almost immediately at his side.

"I seed it," he remarked, as he came up. "Ef this is 'nother trick of the varmints, we'll see if we can't smash it at the beginning."

"What dost thou make of it?"

"There's an Injin with the paddle."

"Dost thou see any more?"

"There may be more hid in the bottom."

"Verily, he does not comprehend his danger," remarked Fielding, with some anxiety, as the Indian continued unhesitatingly on his course.

“If you wish to warn him, you can do so.”

This was uttered more in jest than in earnest, but the Friend instantly took advantage of the permission, and stepping out in full view, he raised his hand and called out:

“I admonish thee to take heed where thou art coming, for thou art running into great danger!”

To the surprise of both the whites, the Indian only paddled the harder, and the next moment his canoe touched the shingle at their feet.

It was then seen that he was the only occupant of the boat, and as the little weazen-faced redskin stepped out, with his wrinkled face expanded into a vast grin, Jud recognized him as the Otter, the companion, as will be remembered, of Colonel Havens, in ascending and descending this same stream, the second and first day preceding.

“He! he! laughed the singular individual, as he advanced and took the proffered hand of the scout; “ain’t you glad to see me?”

“That I am,” replied Jud, with great cordiality.

“I thought so, or I wouldn’t have come.”

“And I am right glad to welcome thee,” added Fielding, as he also offered his hand, “for I observe thou art a friend.”

“Where did you come from?” asked Jud.

“Fort Grandon.”

“Direct?”

“ Yes; I haven’t paused a minute on the way—came very fast. ”

“ Thou must have done that, indeed, if thou hast carried Colonel Havens to his fort and returned afterward. ”

“ That’s what I done,” returned the Otter, with some pride.

“ What made you come back? ”

“ Colonel Havens sent me. ”

“ He did! What for? ”

“ I have a letter. ”

With which the weazen-faced redskin drew a missive from beneath his hunting-shirt, and handed it to Jud. The latter turned it over several times in his hand, and then passed it to Fielding, with the remark.

“ It’s been so long since I larned to read, that I’ve forgot all that I knowed in that line, and never knowed much to forget. ”

Fielding examined the superscription, the moonlight being just sufficient for him to distinguish, written with a lead pencil in a bold hand:

“ LILLIAN PRESCOTT,

“ Sent by the Otter, an Indian Runner. ”

“ She is with you? ” inquired the Indian.

“ Yes; she is asleep, by the camp-fire yonder. If thou wishest, I will hand it to her in the morning. ”

“ That’s just what I want; and now I must go. ”

“ Why such a hurry? ”

“ I am expected at the fort.”

“ Perchance there may be an answer expected to this,” said the Quaker.

“ I was not told to wait for any, but was only asked to see that she got it, and then to make all haste back again, unless I was wanted here. ”

“ Haven’t you seen anything of redskins? ” asked Jud.

The Otter started, as if he had forgotten this altogether.

“ They are all around you—on both shores—everywhere! ”

As he spoke, he swept his hand over his head to signify that each shore was swarming with enemies.

“ How did you get through with your canoe? ”

“ I come up the river till I see sign—then I put my canoe on my head and went through the wood till I see the island—then I paddled out to it. ”

“ How didst thou know that we were here? ”

“ So many of the Indians along shore—I knew that somebody was out here, and who so likely as you? ”

“ Be careful they do not take thee prisoner when thou seekest to return. ”

The Otter laughed his *he! he!* to signify that such a caution was unnecessary to one of his age and experience.

It will be understood, however, that he had greater need of prudence than Red Plume, for he was so short and peculiar in his appearance, that he could not but

be as readily identified by his enemies as if he were a white man.

But Red Plume, in build, dress, appearance and manner, was the same as his tribe, and where his features were not liable to too close a scrutiny, he could easily escape detection. He had done this so repeatedly that it may be said he had scarcely any fear on the present occasion.

Comparatively little information was gained from Otter, and shortly after he took his departure, aiming for the same shore whence he came.

He had reached a point about half way distant, when the report of a gun was heard, and the bullet was seen to skip over the water about twenty feet to the right of the canoe.

"What you shooting at?" demanded Jud, as he hastened to the side of Pipkins, who was rapidly reloading.

"At that confounded Indian, and if I can get loaded soon enough, I'll pepper him, sure."

"You mought fire all night without scaring him, but you may as well save your powder, for he's a friend."

"But he's running off with another canoe. What a wonderful forte those dusky scamps have for stealing boats."

"That's his own boat."

"Ah! that makes a difference. If he'll only come back, I'll apologize for my rudeness."

“No need of that, for I don’t believe he knowed you war shootin’ at him.”

“Who is he, anyway?”

Jud explained the character of the savage, greatly to the surprise of Pipkins, who expressed a desire to cultivate the acquaintance of the Otter.

In making his tour of the island, and explaining to the different sentinels what had taken place, the scout finally came back to where Fielding was awaiting him.

“Wilt thou take my place for awhile, while I go to the camp-fire?” he asked.

Jud willingly consented, and the Quaker made his way to the centre of the wood, where the camp-fire was burning quite low. He was hopeful that the report of Pipkin’s gun had aroused Lillian, so that he might deliver the letter to her at once.

He was not disappointed, for as he came up, he saw the two sisters sitting by the fire, Edith occupying herself with stirring the embers, so as to make the light more cheerful. They looked around in some surprise as he came up.

“Canst thou not sleep in quietness?” asked Fielding, as he halted by their side.

“It seems that with what we had yesterday, we don’t require so much,” replied Edith, with a blush and a smile.

“I trust I am the bearer of good news to thee,” said the Friend, after a moment’s pause; “an Indian runner brought this letter to the island a short time

ago, with the request that I should deliver it to thee."

With which he handed the missive to the astounded Lillian. Then, with a delicacy which did him credit, he bade them good evening and withdrew, that they might not be embarrassed by his presence.

As he moved away, Edith looked after him with a longing, earnest gaze and Fielding, turning his head at the same moment, saw it as reflected by the camp-fire, and he knew in his heart that she loved him.

With a trembling hand Lillian Prescott broke the seal of the letter, and by the fire-light she read the following:

FORT GRANDON, August 20, 1862.

DEAREST LILLIAN:

Forgive my manner of addressing you. I know it will be displeasing, but I cannot forbear doing so for the last time.

I have been at the fort only a few minutes, and my faithful attendant, the Otter, has consented to carry the letter to you, so that I cannot forbear taking the opportunity of saying a few parting words.

I had hopes of being able to march to the assistance of yourself and friends as soon as I returned; but I found orders awaiting which commanded me to go to a point a hundred miles distant, to take charge of a regiment of cavalry that are ready to proceed to the seat of war. I shall have an escort, so that no personal risk will be incurred.

I did everything I could to get permission to send help to you, but am utterly powerless. The Otter has permission to remain with your company, if you desire it. There is such a panic through the northern and

western parts of Minnesota, and such an urgent call from the Government for troops, that my superior officer, who has just returned, peremptorily refuses to allow a single one to go to the relief of the hundreds who are perishing for it.

I pray that you and your friends may safely reach the fort, which is the nearest point that offers any safety; but if Heaven so wills that you shall not, do not forget that you have the whole, fervent, undivided love of my heart.

I thought, when you treated me so cavalierly, that my pride would sustain me in forgetting you; but I find my mistake. I cannot drive you from my thoughts. Even during the busy minutes when I am preparing to leave, and I am compelled to answer questions and give orders innumerable, you are not absent for an instant from my thoughts.

I shall carry your image to my grave. Life, which was so radiant to me but a short time ago, is forbidding and dark. Little care I whether I live or die, for that which made life so sweet, that which fired my ambition, that which thrilled me with a pleasure never before known—all these have been taken away. They can never be replaced, and what is there to bind me to earth?

I cannot blame you for selecting another. You have known him long enough, perhaps, to discover virtues in him which I, in my blind jealousy, failed to see. The most that I can wish you is that he will prove as loving and devoted as I *know* I should have been, had fortune favored me, as I once foolishly believed she would. I only hope he is more worthy of you than he seemed to me.

If this parting had only occurred months ago—if I could blot from my remembrance the sails we have had

delicious hours passed in your society, the looks that I believed were something more than mere looks—in-
deed, if I could turn my back upon the past, and close my eyes to the thousand-and-one little things that have only fanned the flame that has been steadily growing in my heart for months, then could I find happiness in the future, but not otherwise.

I leave you, carrying no harsh remembrance. If your own heart does not accuse you, I shall not.

Had you but called me, as I was leaving you, I would have rushed back to you. Disgrace, dishonor—all would have been unheeded had you but given your commands.

But not a word. I listened intently, but heard nothing. I looked back, but you made no sign. Your heart was unrelenting; in truth, it never throbbed with kindness for me.

Then why can I blame you? I cannot. Good-by. God be with you, and keep you, and make you happy; and may you forget that your path was ever crossed by so unworthy an object as

GEORGE HAVENS.

P. S.—Please hand the inclosed to Captain Swart-
hausen. G. H.

CHAPTER XXV

RED PLUME'S PRISONER

A FEW minutes before reaching shore, Red Plume drew himself up in the canoe, and landed directly at the feet of those who were awaiting him.

"Owaton is a brave warrior," remarked one, as he stepped ashore, meaning to compliment the supposed Indian for his exploit in stealing the boat. Comprehending his intention, Red Plume answered:

"The Yengese fired their guns at Owaton, but they hurt him not. He went under the water, and the bullets passed over his head."

"Great is Owaton. He shall be a chief of the Sioux."

As a matter of course, the supposed Owaton accepted his honors meekly, and made no reply to this high compliment.

"Are the Yengese asleep?" inquired the same speaker.

"Some of them sleep and some do not. Red Plume, the hunter Old Jud, and the Otter of the Cheyennes, and many others are awake."

This was a piece of strategy upon the part of the Sioux, as he could have no suspicion that the runner

was upon the island that very moment. He supposed he was somewhere in the neighborhood, and concluded it advisable, therefore, to locate him among his friends.

It will be seen, also, that this observation of "Owaton" directly witnessed his own skill and bravery, inasmuch as he had succeeded in the face of all these obstacles, where one of the others had failed but a short time before.

"Have they guns and powder?"

"They have guns and powder; they catch fish from the river, and they drink its water."

It will be observed that Red Plume was doing his utmost to put the situation of the fugitives in the strongest light, his object being to discourage the Sioux, and induce them to turn their attention elsewhere—an achievement which, we may as well state, he considered next to impossible.

While this conversation was going on, he was standing among a half-dozen of his race, in the shadow of the trees, where their forms were only dimly outlined, and where there was scarcely a possibility of his identity being suspected.

In truth the mere landing of Red Plume in the manner narrated cannot be regarded as much of an exploit. Being of the same tribe as his enemies, and having spent the first thirty years of his life as one of their warriors who was always noted as a daringly fierce enemy of the whites, there was scarcely a pos-

sibility of his betraying himself, unless by some unforeseen accident.

A few minutes more were occupied in asking and answering questions, the scout, as a matter of course, giving a glowing account of the strength, numbers and watchfulness of the whites. Finally, the others began walking away in the forest, Red Plume accompanying them.

Several rods were passed when he caught sight of a large camp-fire, around which at least twenty Indians were gathered, while he knew that fully as many more were moving around in the woods and along the river.

Here an alarming surprise awaited the friendly Indian. With all his shrewdness, he scarcely suspected the startling discovery he made—that their enemies were *the very Sioux who had so narrowly escaped destroying them upon the lake.*

Aye, Red Plume was thoroughly astounded. He had held a vague fear of such a danger as this, and it will be remembered that he urged Jud not to make more than a temporary halt upon the island; but he scarcely believed that those who were so thoroughly intoxicated in the morning could be in a condition to take the war-path in the evening.

But it was nevertheless true; and the same ferocious aborigines who had so desperately sought their destruction on the shore of Sleeping Water had environed them again, when they had paused to rest upon the island.

Some cautious reconnoitring, united with conjectures upon his part, enabled Red Plume to gain the facts in the case. The lake party had probably used up their whiskey early in the forenoon, and the effects had worn off toward night of the same day, so as to allow them to comprehend their own situation. They could not avoid knowing that the fugitives had descended Crescent River, and they therefore started in pursuit somewhere near nightfall, expecting to come up with them before morning.

The probabilities are that they would have passed the island without suspecting the presence of their prey upon it, had they not encountered a dozen more of their tribe, who had made the discovery, and were carefully watching their movements.

The larger company halted, and the two united, both fully resolved that not a white should ever leave the spot alive. Their manœuvres during the night had been made for the purpose of weakening the fugitives, and destroying their chances of escape by withdrawing their canoes, and also with the object of learning their strength, and whether they were keeping up any sort of watch against attack.

Red Plume was careful to keep beyond the circle of the light thrown out by the camp-fire, for it is almost certain he would have been identified, not only by the warriors themselves, but by the negro Lige, who was lounging on the ground, smoking a pipe, and conducting himself generally as though he was among friends.

In the confusion of passing to and fro, it was no difficult matter for the Indian to withdraw from the others without attracting suspicion. He sauntered carelessly forward, until certain that he was beyond the scrutiny of all, when he hastened to where he had left his canoe.

The tiny vessel lay against the bank, just as he had left it, and a rod or so below was the larger boat, so essential to the escape of the fugitives from the island.

Stepping softly into the birchen canoe, he moved it noiselessly down stream until he reached the larger one; but, while on the very point of unfastening this, he observed that one of the Sioux was sitting in it, so motionless that he suspected he was asleep.

Here was a dilemma, and Red Plume paused a moment, undecided what to do. He had no doubt of his ability to extinguish the sentinel, but the ultimate consequences of an encounter with him were pretty certain to be the entire discomfiture of his scheme.

While debating this point with himself the sentinel spoke.

“What seeks Owaton?”

“Is my brother here?” was the Yankee-like answer.

“He guards the boat against the Yengese and the Red Plume.”

This then was the object of the savage in sitting so motionless in the larger boat. There was a well grounded fear that either the distinguished friendly Indian or old Jud would make an attempt to re-capture

the boat, and the sentinel was stationed here to prevent just such a *coup d'etat*.

Red Plume now resorted to every artifice possible to induce the Sioux to leave his station. He hinted that there was an important council at the camp-fire, at which his presence was needed, and offered to take his place until he chose to return; but the faithful guard steadily refused, and fearing that he had created some suspicion in his mind, the scout withdrew, as if he were going to rejoin the others.

It was with something like chagrin that he sauntered through the woods, in the direction of the camp-fire, for he found himself foiled on the very threshold of his scheme.

There seemed but one way of gaining possession of the coveted boats, and that was by stealing upon and slaying the sentinel; and much as he disliked this course, he resolved that if his second attempt failed, he would do it with all the stealth and vim at his command.

There was the additional incentive of the short period now intervening between the present time and morning. The coming of daylight would postpone any such attempt, and in all probability would defeat them entirely, as it was not likely that the coming night would see matters in the same position as they were now.

Impressed with these facts, Red Plume returned to the river side again sooner than he had at first intended.

Peering cautiously through the wood, he saw the Sioux sitting precisely as he had left him, except that his head was bowed lower, the chin apparently resting upon the breast.

A thrill of hope shot through the breast of Red Plume at the thought that perhaps he was asleep.

Watching him as intently as he could in the gloom for a moment, the scout reached out his hand and broke a twig. It parted with a quick, sharp snap, but never once did the Indian stir his head.

The sentinel was asleep.

Satisfied of this, Red Plume lost not another moment. He stepped as noiselessly down into the water as a veritable phantom, and approached the canoe, which he had re-fastened a short time before.

This was easily loosened, and then allowing the bow softly to touch his shoulders, so as to prevent its passing below him and striking the larger boat, he moved toward the latter, scarcely faster than the almost stationary current.

He had now approached the most delicately dangerous part of his task, that of releasing the larger boat and starting it down stream, without alarming the sentinel within. When the proverbial lightness of the sleep of the American Indian is borne in mind, the difficulty of this work will be fully appreciated.

The wisp of bark which united the prow to a limb was parted with his hunting knife, and then the boat

was shoved out far enough to avoid the overhanging branches, and it began floating with the current.

Red Plume did not enter his own canoe, but supporting himself on the surface, man and boats were drifting downward, as though each was part of some inanimate object, not a ripple disturbing the surface, while the daring Sioux who was performing all this took care to keep his head invisible from those upon the shore.

As there was a bright moon in the sky, it was necessary that Red Plume should descend the river far enough to escape observation whenever he should strike out for the centre; and, remembering the rapidly approaching daylight, and the wonderfully delicate task he had in hand, it will be seen that he had enough to engage all his attention and energy.

When they had drifted in this manner for several hundred yards, he set himself to unite the two boats. This he successfully accomplished, although great risk was incurred.

His next step was to enter his canoe, which was done without any sensible jarring of the larger boat, and then everything was "ship-shape."

Still the sentinel sat with bowed head, never once looking up. Sleeping like a cat, the plash of the paddle or a slight jerk of the boat would have aroused him; but none of these disturbing causes came about, so that his slumbers remained undisturbed.

A great deal of distance remained for Red Plume to recover, and heading out in the current, he began

paddling across the stream, ever on the alert for any sights or sounds, from the shore; but all was still, and far above him in the centre of the stream he could dimly discern the outlines of the island, where his friends were so patiently awaiting his return.

Gradually and steadily the Indian increased the speed of the boats until they were going at the highest rate possible, and he soon reached a point as close to the other bank as he wished to go.

A grim smile lit up his features as he reflected upon the success of his attempt to outwit his enemies. He had not only recovered the two stolen boats, but he had run away with the man set to guard them.

He no longer held the purpose of slaying the sleeping Indian, but intended to retain him as a prisoner.

He was removed so far from his reserves that Red Plume felt he had him at his mercy, even if he should spring overboard and attempt to elude him in that way.

As to the ultimate disposal of the sentinel that was a question to be determined by circumstances.

Red Plume still pressed forward with his prizes, and was nearly abreast the lower end of the island when a wailing shout was heard from the shore. It was instantly echoed by a dozen throats, and was the announcement that the recapture of the canoes had been discovered.

But it was now too late to retrieve their error, and the Sioux leisurely approached his destination, as one who considers the battle ended.

Crash! went a rifle, and the whistling bullet warned Red Plume that he was the target of some one.

“Surrender, I command you!” called out Pipkins, springing to his feet, and excitedly flinging his arms. “Don’t you undertake to run away with that boat again, or I’ll—”

But Jud Judkins made his appearance at this juncture, and extinguished the over-vigilant sentinel.

The sudden uproar had as suddenly awakened the prisoner, who started up with a bewildered air. At the same moment Red Plume leaped like a panther into the boat, and, with knife in hand, confronted him.

Not a word passed, but the savage comprehended the situation, and sinking down in the bottom of the boat, signified his acceptance of the situation.

It was just beginning to grow light in the east as captor and captive landed, and one or two of the sentinels gathered around them to hear the particulars of the daring exploit of the scout.

He did not seem to be communicative, but a few replies to Jud were sufficient for him to understand how the thing had come about, and not a little admiration was excited by his account.

The two boats were fastened at the lower end of the island, in full sight of the Indians, something after the fashion of the aborigines in leaving their scalp-lock, as a challenge to whomever chooses to come and take it.

The captive was sullen and silent. There were no signs of fear in his face, for he was too accustomed to

this species of warfare not to be prepared for any and all consequences. His black eyes had a defiant glitter as they glanced from one to the other of those gathered about him, as if to say that he cared for none of them.

Muggins and Prescott kept their places, although they had some idea of what had occurred so near them, while Fielding, Jud and Pipkins constituted a sort of reception committee for the landing-party.

"You have drawn an elephant in the lottery," said Pipkins, addressing Red Plume, "and what's going to be done with him?"

"He's our prisoner," replied Jud.

"Exactly; and how many men is it going to take to watch him? If we only had a prison here, such as we have in Chicago, we might lock him up, and set Red Plume to catching them one by one till we had them all in durance, and then we would sail down the river with banners flying."

"I think you ought to be able to keep him in custody," remarked Captain Swarthausen, coming up at this moment.

"I never had a special admiration for the noble red man," replied the exquisite. "He's a very nice character for the novelists to make heroes of, and he may be a handy fellow to be enfranchised after awhile; but no noble red man for me, if you please. I'm willing to let him go toward the setting sun just as fast as he can travel."

"What dost thou propose to do with the prisoner?"

inquired Fielding, who manifested not a little anxiety about his welfare.

“If we can’t do anything else,” replied Jud, “we can starve him as we did Jarrik, and scalp him.”

“That would be wicked and cruel,” added the Friend, with no little earnestness. “He is a helpless prisoner, and we cannot lay violent hands upon him. Why not try the effect of kindness upon him?”

“What do you mean?”

“Treat him kindly, and then let him go.”

“Do you think he would then induce the others to take their departure?” asked Captain Swarthausen.

“I am not prepared to say that,” replied Fielding, who had learned too much, since his residence in Minnesota, to indulge any such fallacious hopes; “but it might make a friend of *him*.”

There was something more than a mere sentimentalism in this remark, and all appreciated him. Who could tell what good results might follow the plan proposed?

“It’s purty sartin it won’t pay to keep him as a prisoner,” replied Jud, after a moment’s pause. “I’ll question Red Plume, and see what ideas he has about the varmint.”

The scout spoke to his friend in the Indian tongue, as their communication in that was more easy than in English, and turned to his friends with a laugh.

“Red Plume is very ’commodating this morning. He says we can kill the varmint, or let him go, just as we choose.”

“Didst thou propose the exercise of kindness toward him?”

“Yes; and he’s willing.”

“Then let us make the experiment.”

The party began moving toward the centre of the grove, where the camp-fire had been kindled, Jud taking occasion to admonish Muggins against exposing himself, as it was an easy rifle-shot from the shore; and there was little doubt of the Sioux seizing every opportunity of picking off all they could.

No little consternation was created among the female portion of the fugitives by the bringing in of the prisoner. Dinah, who was just beginning to prepare their piscatorial meal, gave a fashionable scream, dropped her fish, and threw up her arms.

“My gracious! what you bring dat darkey here fur?”

“He wants his breakfast,” replied Captain Swart-hausen.

“Am he de one dat ’bused my baby?” she asked, beginning to recover herself, and looking rather savagely at him.

“Ask Cato.”

The young man, thus appealed to, took a cautious survey of the Indian, and pronounced him innocent of all ill-will toward him.

“Don’t remember dat I ever seed him afore—suah dat he neber ’bused me; dat is, I don’t tink he did.”

“Den he can hab his breakfas’ jist as soon as it’s ready, and not afore.”

Red Plume motioned to his prisoner to be seated upon the ground, but he refused, and stood with folded arms, sullen and defiant, apparently unconscious of the presence of any one else near him.

The captor did not urge his point, but seated himself close by, so as to be ready to interpose, should he make any movement toward escaping from his custody.

While matters were thus, Lillian Prescott delivered to Captain Swarthausen the note from his nephew.

As may be supposed, the officer read it with eager interest, and speedily made known its contents.

“Back at Fort Grandon safe,” said he, “and ordered away; so there is no telling when we shall see him again.”

“Is it out of his power to send assistance to us?” asked Fielding.

“Yes; he has done his utmost to induce the commandant to do so, but he says runners are constantly coming in with similar requests, and he has peremptorily refused to weaken his force by allowing a single man to leave upon any such errand, so we are shut off from all hope in that direction.”

“He will allow us to make a friendly call upon him while on our way back home?” asked Pipkins.

“Yes; he will give shelter and protection to all who come to him, but he won’t help any one to get there.”

“I suppose he is driven to act sternly in the matter,” said Fielding, always charitable toward his fellow-men.

"Yes; I appreciate his position," replied Captain Swarthaussen; "a commander can't be just without being inflexible in his line of conduct."

"Do you know what I would do, if I was commander of this department?" asked Pipkins, with an air which showed that he had developed some brilliant idea.

"I suppose you would resign and go to Chicago."

"Not a bit of it; I would put Fort Grandon on wheels, so that it could be moved all around the country. Thus you see it could be sent to any point desired, and the whole country would be protected."

"You would institute an order of land iron-clads."

"Rather of perambulating forts."

No comment was made upon this admirable idea by the listeners, so Pipkins added another observation.

"The longer I live, the more convinced do I become that I was born a military genius. Nothing is lacking but the opportunity."

All this time Dinah was busily engaged in the culinary line, and she soon had enough fish ready for an ordinary Indian, and announced the same to Jud Judkins.

The hunter took the choicest portions offered, and spreading it upon some large green leaves, carried it to the Indian and offered it to him. The prisoner looked at him a moment as if he did not comprehend his meaning; but, when it was repeated, he closed his lips and shook his head. Jud spoke in Sioux, urging

him to accept it; but he steadily refused, clinching his declination with the characteristic remark, that he would feel no hunger while in the camp of his enemies.

"That's all lost," said Jud, as he turned his back upon the Sioux, and walked to where the others stood.

"No, it isn't lost," said Cato; "gib me dat."

The fish being passed to him, the negro proved emphatically the truth of what he had said.

"Thou hast shown him thy good will," said Fielding; "he cannot fail to see thy friendly disposition toward him."

"I propose that we cram it down his throat," said Pipkins; "that is, some other fish, for that delicate infant is already on the bones; then the Indian will be sure to remember how kindly we feel toward him."

"Is there nothing else that we can do for him?" asked the Friend.

"Nothing; except to let him go."

"Let that be done, then."

Red Plume being consulted, expressed his willingness, and the suggestion was carried out by Jud, who, placing himself beside the savage, faced toward the river, and signified to him to follow.

The Sioux required no urging, and a moment later the two stood beside the flowing river.

"Go to your people," said Jud, in the Sioux tongue; "we give you back your life."

The prisoner went without delay. The scout watched him until he had swam the intervening dis-

tance and came out upon the main land. Then he returned to his friends, and translated the remark of Red Plume.

“That varmint will be the first one to tomahawk any of us that gives him the chance.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE RETURN SHOT

FROM one side of the island a narrow point of land put out, and in the eddy immediately below this was any quantity of fish, which were easily hauled from the water by the skilled hand of Jud Judkins, who was subjected only to the annoyance of keeping himself out of range of the Sioux sharpshooters on shore.

While the morning meal was preparing, a sort of council of war was held, at which all were present excepting Muggins, who persisted in remaining at his station until some one was ready to relieve him.

As a matter of course, Red Plume and old Jud were the oracles. While both of them saw the sad error committed in remaining upon the island until the great danger was upon them, neither could point out the way of escape. The hunter took occasion to impress upon all the peril to which they were exposed of being fired at from the shore, and cautioned them against approaching the river.

"There'll never be a minute all day," said he, "when some of the varmints won't have their eyes on it, and the first chance they get they'll crack away."

"And will they hit us?" inquired Pipkins.

"The distance is so short that they can't help it."

The only time that afforded anything like an opportunity for stratagem was at night under the protecting shelter of darkness; but, as there was quite a bright moon, such a night as the one just past would be of no more benefit than noonday.

"It must cloud up," said Jud, "the moon has got to be hid; there must be a regular storm that'll make it as black as a wolf's mouth. Then, there'll be some chance of sliding off in the dark."

Red Plume having manifested some dissatisfaction at the departure of the Otter, without waiting to see him, it occurred to Captain Swarthausen that perhaps there was a good cause for it.

"It may be that *he* has some friends to whom he desires to send a message," remarked the officer turning toward Jud.

The latter shook his head.

"No; it ain't that. There's only a runner here and there that he consorts with, and no notice would be took of any message that he could send the Fort, no more than if it was from me."

The result of the deliberations was the conviction that it only remained for the fugitives to preserve a "masterly inactivity" until nightfall again, unless the Sioux should make some demonstration against them, compelling them to defend themselves.

This decided upon, all sat down to their morning meal, excepting Red Plume, who relieved Muggins while he joined them. But before doing so, all knelt

upon the green sod, and in the cool shade of the wood, offered up fervent prayers and supplications to the Great Being who had brought them so far through the wilderness, and who alone could safely conduct them through the danger by which they were environed. All hearts were solemn, for it was no time for levity. The shadow of death was across their path, and the hand of man was powerless to lead them through. Even the shallow-brained Pipkins for the time was serious, and none joined more earnestly in the supplications than did he.

When they rose to their feet, the eyes of more than one were moistened with tears, and for the time the silence was unbroken. Poor Muggins! erst so genial, so childishly good-natured and frolicsome, so infantile almost in his reliance upon his wife and others, looked so woe-begone and sorrow-stricken, that there was none who did not pity him. Pipkins regretted keenly the unfeeling words which he had uttered, although she had irritated him, and he would have given a great deal could he have recalled them.

But, as this was impossible, he made it up as well as he could in kindness toward Muggins himself. He presented him with his pocket-knife, lent him his meerschaum, and showed, in a dozen different ways, that underneath his trifling manner there was a sympathetic feeling for a suffering brother, which could not forbear manifesting itself.

When the meal was finished, those who had acted as

sentinels during the preceding night, disposed of themselves so as to gain a few hours' sleep, the guardianship of the island being left entirely in the hands of Red Plume, who certainly was well qualified to assume such a responsibility.

"They won't steal many canoes while *he's* watching," remarked Jud, as he sat with his back against a tree in his favorite sleeping attitude.

"No; nor dey won't while I'se on guard," added Cato, "'cause when I undertooks to keep watch, I does it."

"You've been to sleep all night, so you can help him."

"Not jist yit," replied the African; "I hasn't quite finished my nap. Wait till I wakes up agin, and den I'll do anything you wants me to do, dat is, if I wants to do it myself."

The day gave signs of being one of the hottest of the season. Even at this early hour its warmth was felt among the trees, although a slight breeze prevented it becoming oppressive so long as that lasted.

Lillian and Edith, with their mother, strolled back and forth for a short distance through the wood, taking good care to remember the warning of Jud about exposing themselves to the fire of the vigilant Sioux. Their curiosity, however, led them to a point where they could part the bushes and gaze across the intervening water; but, although they looked long and earnestly, they detected no sign of their enemies. All was

as still and motionless as it must have been a thousand years before.

The wonderful propensity of the African race to slumber is well known, so that Dinah, although she had slept the whole night through, glided off into unconsciousness again, with Cato, her baby boy, within reach of her brawny arm, whenever she chose to wake. Thus, for the time, nearly all the fugitives were asleep, excepting the females mentioned.

As these wandered cautiously to and fro, they encountered Red Plume, who came upon them with such a noiseless suddenness that a slight scream escaped Lillian. The Indian stopped, and his grim features relaxed into a smile as he looked at the timid ones, whose fright was natural enough.

"'Fraid?" he asked, in his broken, jerky manner.

"I was alarmed until I recognized you," replied Lillian, "but we are safer in your society than in that of any one else."

The dark eyes of the Indian lit up with pleasure at this compliment, which he knew was sincere.

"Keep way from water," he added; "Injin ober dere."

"We looked a moment ago," said Edith, "but could not see any."

"Dey dere," he added, more earnestly than before; and then, as he was about to move away, he beckoned to them to follow.

They did so unhesitatingly, until they caught the

glimmer of the water through the trees; then their leader paused, and carefully drawing some undergrowth aside, asked them to look.

All three did so, peering over the shoulders of the Indian. Following closely the direction indicated, they first descried a canoe drawn up under the bank, so that only one end was barely visible, and a little to one side of it they distinguished nearly a half dozen Sioux, sometimes halting and sometimes moving back and forth with a stealthy tread, as if fearful that the noise of their footsteps might reach hostile ears. It was like looking down into deep, clear water for fish, whose backs can scarcely be distinguished, except when they glide from place to place. It was only when Red Plume secured their gaze upon the very spot, that the aborigines could be distinguished through the interstices of limbs and vegetation as they moved along.

The females gazed for a long time, as if fascinated by this evidence of the danger menacing them, and then only withdrew when their friend gave them an unmistakable hint to do so.

“And they are the same who burned our house?” inquired Mrs. Prescott.

Red Plume replied by a nod.

“How long will they wait there?”

“Till git us, or we git way,” was the definite answer. “No whiskey now—no drunk come—dey wait.”

“How are we to escape?” asked Mrs. Prescott,

looking earnestly into the swarthy face before her, as if she were about to read her own doom.

“Great Spirit tell,” replied the redskin, reverentially pointing upward. “He tell Red Plume, and Red Plume take all off from Sioux.”

[There was an earnest simplicity in the answer of the savage which touched the hearts of his listeners. He had the reputation of being a Christian Indian, although his peculiar reserve and reticence prevented, in a degree, the reading of the thoughts that frequently passed through his brain. Jud had spoken of his way of praying when they were alone, and his frequent communings with the Great Spirit who ruled them all; but enough of his old nature remained to give him the wildest pleasure when he tore the scalp from the head of his victim, and held the reeking trophy aloft, and he uttered his shouts of defiance.

But there was one thing of which all were certain, Red Plume was as intensely hated by the wild Sioux of the North-West as he was esteemed by the white race, whom for so many years he had served with such self-sacrificing devotion.

More than once he had acted as guide to parties going overland to California, and when the settlements of the territories began in earnest, he proved of incalculable value to the forts, stations and settlers themselves.

Possessed of extraordinary fleetness of foot, with a natural keenness of intellect, trained by many a year

upon the trail and war-path, he was a man who never, to any serious degree, had been outwitted by his enemies, nor had he ever fallen into their power, when they would have been glad to sacrifice a half-dozen of their best warriors for the sake of securing him.

He carefully scanned the shores, but discovered nothing new, and turning his back upon the ladies, walked rather abruptly away.

Left to themselves, they wandered off toward the lowermost point of the island, where they carefully refrained from exposing themselves, but ventured upon the dangerous experiment of peering forth in quest of their foes. They looked long and searchingly, but it seemed as if even those whom their guide pointed out had all withdrawn further into the wood, for not one could descry them.

“Can you see the canoe?” inquired Mrs. Prescott. “I can’t make that out even.”

Nor could the others, proving that the Indians had really left, or that the ladies needed the keen vision of Red Plume to direct their own.

“I am sure I can find it,” said Lillian, taking a step or two in advance, “for I do not believe they are gone yet.”

“Be careful,” warned Edith, placing her hand upon her shoulder; “you run great risk of being killed.”

“I do not fear—”

Lillian uttered a shriek, and fell back in the arms of her mother and elder sister, and with the bound of a

frightened panther, Red Plume, who had heard the spiteful crack of the rifle, was at their side.

“Where hit?” he asked, dropping on one knee and gazing intently upon the pale face of the girl.

“Nowhere,” she replied, compressing her lips, and bravely rising to the sitting position; “it was the wind of the ball before my eyes.”

“*De wind* kill like ball,” was the truthful remark of the Sioux.

“Not always,” replied Lillian, who, for the sake of the others, forced back the singular faintness that was coming over her. “I felt it, and thought the bullet had gone through my head for the instant, but I now begin to think it did not,”

Red Plume sprang to his feet, and examined the limbs and branches about them. It required but a moment for the keen eyes to detect the spot where the well-aimed bullet had clipped off the bark and half-severed the limb of a tree in their front, which thereby diverted the deadly messenger just sufficiently to cause it to miss the brain of Lillian by scarcely a hair’s breadth.

It was one of those narrow escapes—so narrow, indeed, that the remembrance of it almost takes one’s breath away for a long time afterward.

“Who tink do dat?” asked Red Plume, while a curious smiling expression overspread his countenance.

Not knowing what he meant, Edith replied by several questions, until she learned that Red Plume was

seeking to learn the identity of the would-be murderer of Lillian.

Of course none had the slightest conception.

“De Sioux dat I bring shore—den let go.”

Even this positive assertion of their friend could scarcely be believed, for they were at a loss to understand how Red Plume could assure himself of it.

“See here,” said he, rightly understanding the incredulous looks upon their faces, “me show him.”

In the same cautious manner as before he parted the bushes, and they looked forth and thereby plainly saw the head and shoulders of an Indian looking out from behind a tree, as though he were carefully endeavoring to learn the result of his shot.

“Dat him?” asked Red Plume, with childish eagerness.

“There isn’t enough difference between your people’s looks for me to distinguish them apart at that great distance,” replied Edith.

The other two expressed the same opinion, and Red Plume was thus deprived of a triumphant confirmation of his remark at the time of the liberation of the prisoner.

“Still we know you are right,” said Mrs. Prescott, smiling upon the redskin, who apparently was not a little disappointed.

“Yes; Red Plume never makes a mistake,” added Lillian, placing her white, delicate hand upon the

swarthy, muscular shoulder of the Sioux with all the confiding faith of a child.

He turned and looked the thanks, which he could not express in her tongue. Then he gently moved her to one side, and took up his rifle and raised the hammer.

No one suspected what he meant, until, with a quiet swiftness, he brought it to a level, and pointed the muzzle through the bushes. Only an instant was it held thus, and then the stillness was broken by its clear report, and mingled with the sound was the horrid cry of the stricken man at whom it was aimed.

“Neber do dat more,” said Red Plume, as he coolly reloaded his piece; “he bad Injun—he gone.”

All were hushed by this sudden shot and its result, and while they admired the courage of their dusky friend, there was a certain awe inspired by this evidence of his anger that prevented their commenting upon what they had seen him do.

“Now go back,” said he, “Red Plume keep watch.”

His advice was heeded, and the three walked thoughtfully to where the camp-fire had died entirely out. Here they found all wrapped in slumber, except Jud, who opened his eyes as they came up.

“When I dream I hear a gun go off,” said he, “it’s purty sartin that thar’s been one fired.”

“So there has,” replied Edith. “Red Plume did it.”

“And what fur?—but here comes the chap himself, and he can tell me all about it.”



“ Neber do dat more,” said Red Plume. “ He bad Injun—he gone.”—P. 286.

And so he did in the course of a few moments. Then the two hunters conversed quite earnestly in the Indian tongue, and Jud announced to the listening but mystified ladies :

“ He’s goin’ to leave the island.”

“ Now? ” asked Lillian.

“ Yes, now, in broad day.”

“ But he will be shot! ”

“ P’raps so; but he’s got some kink in his head, and thinks he sees a way to play another trick on the varmints. There ain’t no use of talking, for he’s bound to go—this very minute, too.”

CHAPTER XXVII

THE QUAKER'S WOOING

IT WAS no ordinary feat to escape from an island during broad daylight, when it was under the close surveillance of the Sioux, on both shores, and yet Red Plume accomplished it by his great skill in swimming.

Choosing a particular portion of the shore where the overhanging undergrowth was the heaviest, he quietly let himself down into the water, took a long dive, and when he came to the surface every portion of his person remained under except his nose, whose size was not sufficient to attract any notice except when very near; and in this position he supported himself on his back, and simply "floated with the tide."

Old Jud, who was intently watching the manœuvres of his dusky friend, followed with his eye the drifting signal, as the bee-hunter traces the bullet-like insect, when it shoots through the air, until, at last, it was lost to view, although the body was still within rifle-shot of the island, and of the Indians upon the shore.

"Ef *I* can't see him from here," he reflected, "there ain't much danger of the varmints setting eyes upon him."

But this comforting reflection was cut short by seeing a small canoe put out from the bank some distance down the shore; and begin paddling toward the centre.

“It can’t be they’ve seen him,” muttered Jud, as a chill of apprehension ran through him, “unless they spied him go into the water.”

A long stretch separated the canoe from the island, but in the hope of deterring the Indians, the hunter brought his piece to his shoulder, and fired at them. It looked as if the occupants had no thought that they were the recipients of this compliment, for they paddled ahead in the same deliberate manner as at first.

The well-known fact of the greater rapidity and distinctness of sound in passing through a solid or liquid (like water as compared with air) served Red Plume a good turn in this instance. The wash of the canoe, as it left the shore, and the dip of its paddles, as it passed out into the stream, were all heard by him, and the cause thereof was no matter of doubt for a moment.

It looked as if the fearless scout had placed himself in a position of frightful danger; for great as was his skill in the water, he had no hope in a trial of speed with a canoe propelled by his own countrymen.

Still, Red Plume preserved his imperturbable coolness, and it may be said that he was not given an additional pulse-beat, as he floated aimlessly downward. Although matters pointed the other way, he believed the savages had no knowledge of the ruse he had at-

tempted. Some other object had caused them to start across the river.

But, if such were the case, the aborigines had so timed their journey as to make it look very likely that they would intercept their bitter foe ere he could drift beyond their reach. It was one of those accidental coincidences which are often fraught with serious consequences.

In his peculiar position, Red Plume was unable to locate the canoe, but above the faint humming which the submerged swimmer feels in his ears, he could detect the steady dip and wash of the paddle, and he had not a moment of doubt of the general course of the boat.

Great as was the risk, the Indian determined to find out to a certainty the precise location of his foes. He was sure of the side upon which he ought to look, and he suddenly threw his head forward, imitating the movement of a fish, as it is sometimes seen to leap clear of the surface.

The simple artifice was successful. The splash he thus made was observed by the Sioux, but their eyes were turned in another direction, and they very naturally attributed it to the cause that Red Plume intended should be taken.

As he performed the stratagem he caught sight of the boat, and saw that, from the direction and the speed with which it was going, it was certain to inter-

cept him very near the centre of the stream, unless something was done to stave off the collision.

Red Plume had the choice of hastening his downward progress, checking it altogether, or of accomplishing the same purpose by shying off from the centre of the river.

He concluded, after scarcely a moment's hesitation, to turn toward the bank which was opposite the one left by the canoe, and driving himself down stream at the same time with all the strength he could summon.

He could gather comparatively little speed from his submerged position, and from the danger there was of attracting the attention of the lynx-eyed savages in the boat, but he did his utmost; and when the canoe had reached a point that was precisely the same distance from the shore as himself something like twenty yards separated them.

It was a critical moment for the Indian, for had the eyes of the Sioux been turned toward him they would have been pretty certain to see the upturned face, as we see the bronzed countenance of a man gazing through the window-pane; but, very naturally and very fortunately, the redskins were scrutinizing the island, and had no suspicion of the proximity of the abhorred scout who had so often wrought them dire ill.

At this time Jud Judkins was watching the canoe as a general scrutinizes the movement of his enemy. Great as was his confidence in the sagacity of his dusky companion, it was not until the boat had passed consider-

ably beyond the centre of the stream, that hope revived in his breast. When, at last, it glided under the bank, and the occupants landed, he drew a sigh of relief.

“Good!” he exclaimed, with sparkling eyes; nobody but Red Plume could have done that!”

The afternoon was now well advanced, and all the fugitives were astir. Old Jud returned to the camp, and cautioned each against exposing himself or herself to observation from the mainland, enforcing his warning by narrating the narrow escape of Lillian Prescott.

He promised to patrol the island himself, so that no necessity could exist for any tempting the death that continually impended.

This enforced quiescence was naturally irksome to our friends, who saw only an increase of danger in every moment that they spent upon this narrow strip of land. A general feeling manifested itself that, if another morning found them there, they would never leave it.

The precise object of Red Plume's departure could not even be conjectured. Even Old Jud, when appealed to, declared that he had scarcely a suspicion of what it could be. That it was very important was manifest from the great risk he voluntarily assumed.

“You'll hear from him in good time,” was the only reply he could give to their numerous appeals for information.

Left entirely to themselves, the different members of the party “killed time” as best they could, and each

in a characteristic way, and not forgetful of the reiterated warning of him who might now be regarded as their commander-in-chief.

The latter walked slowly back and forth the entire length of the island, down one side and up the other, insinuating himself among and through the bushes with the dextrous noiselessness of a weasel.

Captain Swarthausen, observing the dejection of spirits in Muggins, lounged upon the ground beside him, and did his utmost to interest him in the "situation." He succeeded far better than he anticipated, for to this officer was given remarkable conversational powers, and he was quite pleased to see his friend cheer up, and answer and propose questions in quite an animated manner.

Mr. Prescott and his wife sauntered a short distance away, arm-in-arm, talking together in low tones, thankful for the guidance that had led them thus far, and only praying that the protecting hand would not be drawn from them in this their hour of extremity.

Lillian wandered off, seeking some secluded spot, where she could find opportunity to re-read and study the letter that the Otter had brought to her during the darkness of the night; but when alone, she was alarmed to discover that the precious missive was gone.

She had lost it somewhere upon the island.

Augustus Pipkins filled and lit his meerschaum, and then lounged toward a different point from the others,

seeking some place where he might loll in the cool of the wood and enjoy his nicotine.

“Now, if I only had a novel, it wouldn’t be so bad, after all, to stretch out and read yourself asleep; or if I had a copy of some good newspaper or magazine, I wouldn’t object to staying here for several days; but I will seek some secluded retreat, and there I will engage in philosophical meditation,” and the young gentleman passed his hand over his forehead as thoughtfully as ever did the veriest bookworm.

Dinah, the cook, opened her eyes for a few minutes, and then shut them in sleep again.

Cato remained seated upon the ground, wide awake and whistling some melody, and contented until he became hungry again.

How it came about cannot be said with any certainty; but, although Edith Prescott and Fielding took almost opposite routes, yet they had been absent scarce ten minutes when they suddenly came face to face in the wood, and both paused with a look of surprise.

Edith blushed, smiled, and saluted him, and the young Friend showed scarcely less confusion, but neither turned and fled. Old Jud making his appearance at this juncture, afforded both considerable relief in the way of giving them an opportunity of exchanging a few words with him. But he tarried only a moment and moving rapidly away, they were left to themselves again.

Accepting an invitation to do so, Edith seated her-

self upon a small knoll near at hand, while the young Friend very respectfully did the same, only taking pains that a goodly distance separated them.

“How wonderfully we have been brought through danger thus far!” remarked Fielding, after several moments of embarrassing silence. “Truly the hand of God has sustained us.”

“It is what I have been thinking of ever since I awoke,” she replied, speaking the literal truth. “So great, indeed, has been the mercy of God, that I cannot believe He will forsake us in this hour, when we can see no way of escape.”

“He surely will not, but He will not deliver us unless we help ourselves. But for the watchfulness of Red Plume and old Jud, what would have become of us?”

“You need not except yourself,” said Edith, looking in his face; “for father says all would have been lost long ago but for you.”

“He judges me unjustly. My belief is against all manner of warfare, and I have not fired my gun with intent to kill since this calamity has come upon us.”

“It is not the firing of guns that has saved us.”

“But it has done an important part; without it, we all would have been lost long before this.”

“And without the watchfulness and skill that you showed at the house, father says the place would have been burned long ago. But I do not wish to *force* any praise upon you,” said Edith, with a smile. “I know

nothing myself of what you did. I only repeat what father said, and you cannot ask me to disbelieve *him*."

"No, I would not make such a request of thee. Equally hopeless would have been our situation without the presence of thy father and mother. If any praise be due me, it must be shared with them."

And thus modestly did Fielding parry the compliments that Edith in her partiality could not refrain from directing toward him. But he showed such a real antipathy to anything of the character that she refrained from carrying it any further.

"It would be idle to deny that great danger menaced us," he added, after another awkward pause, "when the heathen encompassed us all about; and more than once I was sure they would overcome us all, but during all that time I can say that I never failed to think of thee."

There was no mistaking these words, nor the earnest gaze which accompanied them. Edith hung her head, but managed to find voice to reply:

"I am glad to find that I was not forgotten by my friends. Not knowing how we were situated, all of you must have felt anxious about us. I am sure there was scarcely a moment that we were not praying for our friends on the other side the lake."

"Yes; the heart of thy mother was wrung with grief until she learned from Red Plume that thou wert safe; but not even then could we free ourselves of all anxiety,

for there never was a time when thou wert not in great peril."

Edith suddenly turned her head, as if alarmed at something.

"What is it?" inquired Fielding, rising to his feet and approaching closer to her.

"I heard a rustling in the bushes, as though some one or something was approaching. It sounded directly behind me."

"There is nothing there," replied the Friend, after looking at the undergrowth for a moment. "Thou wert probably deceived."

"Perhaps so."

Very likely as a means of protection, Fielding seated himself considerably nearer her than at first, and very naturally, too, their tones became quite low and tender.

"It sounded like the rustling of a bird," she said, referring to the noise which had disturbed her.

"Very likely it was," replied the Friend. "What more natural than that it should become startled at our presence, and fly away? But I will keep close to thee, lest it may be the warning of danger."

Edith made no objection to the proximity of her chivalrous friend, although she could have given no logical reason why there was more safety within an arm's length of him than within a half dozen feet. But had her heart confessed the truth, it would have told of the pleasure and delight of knowing that Fielding was so near her. His handsome face spoke only

of the nobility of the soul within. His deportment was consistent with his profession, and yet Colonel Havens could not surpass him in true courage, nor could any arm be relied upon with greater confidence than his, when there was need of good, strong blows being struck.

Now and then, Fielding looked over his shoulder, to make sure that no terrible enemy was stealing upon them unawares; but as he became interested in the words of her at his side, he gradually forgot this precaution, and found time only to gaze into her peerless face, and to reply to the words that fell from her lips.

It was hardly to be expected that the Friend would become sentimental in his utterances, and yet what are we to think of such expressions as the following:

“I feared that the hours would pass wearily to me, while compelled to stay upon this island; but verily, they are gliding fast.”

“That is curious, indeed.”

“Not so, when I reflect upon the cause thereof.”

“And what can be the reason?” asked Edith, literally driven into asking the question.

“It can be none other than that I have peace and quietness—”

“Ah! I understand.”

“And am in thy presence, listening to thy words, and exchanging thoughts with thee.”

“It cannot be—”

Fielding seized the arm of Edith Prescott, springing

to his feet at the same time, and threw her forward with great violence, but still retaining his gripe upon her arm, prevented her from falling. Startled and bewildered, she turned her head to see what it meant, when she observed him stamping his right heel upon the ground with a furious vigor, and with a glowing face that showed that his fury was fairly roused.

Then as she looked, she saw something writhing under his heel, and only a second glance was needed to reveal an enormous rattlesnake already crushed out of all semblance of a reptile.

The *crotalus* species, as is well known, is easily killed, and after the first stamp or two, its contortions may be said to have been involuntary. When Fielding ceased, not a spark of life remained.

Then he picked up the reptile upon a large stick, and carrying it to the edge of the river, threw it in, and when he returned to Edith he was as calm and self-possessed as ever.

“Let us leave this spot,” he said, leading the way to a still more retired nook, where not more than a dozen yards separated them from Augustus Pipkins, although neither party was aware of it. But there was little probability of either disturbing the other, as peculiar circumstances surrounded both.

“We must be careful,” said Fielding, “for it is a general belief that if you find one of these serpents, you are certain to find another at no great distance.”

“How came you to see him?” inquired Edith, who had hardly recovered from her agitation.

“Didn’t thou hear the whirr of his rattle?”

“I heard nothing at all.”

“That rustling which first caught thy ear was made by the reptile, as he lay coiled under the bush close by us. Neither of us saw him, for we had no suspicion that so dangerous a creature was so near, and it was too small to conceal anything larger. While thou wert speaking, I heard the rattle, and when I looked up its head was drawn back to strike thee, but thou escaped just in time. The rattlesnake is a sluggish creature, and it was an easy matter for me to kill him before he could recover himself.”

“And, under Heaven, you saved my life, and I thank you,” said Edith, laying her hand within that of his, while her dark eyes filled with tears, and spoke far more eloquently than did her mouth, when she uttered these words.

When she attempted to withdraw her hand, it was held fast, and the two looked into each other’s countenance for a moment without speaking. They saw eye to eye.

There is feeling too deep for words, and it was such that swayed the hearts of these lovers, as they gazed through the “windows of the soul,” and saw an affection, profound, pure and fervent, such as neither had scarcely suspected until now, but the revelation of

which gave to both a pleasure such as had scarcely ever entered their dreams.

They understood each other. The strong, manly heart of Fielding, the Quaker, overflowed with love for the queenly Edith Prescott, and hers was filled with the same emotion—as deep, as pure and as profound.

But while she gazed, her eyes dimmed from the gathering moisture, and her sight grew indistinct. Then she felt something drawing her gently toward him who was at her side, and when her head rested, it was upon the shoulder of him who felt that he gladly would have held it there forever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN UNSUCCESSFUL WOOING

AUGUSTUS PIPKINS looked upon himself as thoroughly refreshed. He had undergone a night of terrible watching and labor—that is all that had been spent in watching and labor; but the few hours obtained in the way of rest, he was convinced were all that he required.

“Because if they were not,” he reasoned with himself, as he thoughtfully drew his hand across his massive forehead, “then I should still feel the languor of insidious coma. That I consider as plain as a theorem in Euclid, and considerably plainer, if it is expected that I am to comprehend it.”

He walked meditatively along a short distance further, and then, as usual, gave utterance to his thoughts.

“If I can only bring myself to believe that this is a quiet pic-nic that I am on with the boys, that there is an abundance of champagne along, and that I am nobly denying myself the indulgence of it, why it won’t be so bad but what I may extract some enjoyment from it; I can look upon myself as quite a hero—hello!”

Just then he caught sight of Fielding and Edith, as

they sat with their backs toward him. He paused a moment, and then walked on.

"It's a pity they don't speak a little louder, for, as it is, I am unable to distinguish their words—but that looks rather spooney to me."

He walked on in the same thoughtful manner, but seemed in a very serene frame of mind.

"However, I have no objection to Edith taking up with the Quaker if she wants him, as he is a man of good moral character, so far as I can learn. It's a pity, however, that he isn't engaged in the insurance business, so as to have something upon which to rely to support my cousin in the style she ought to have. Life insurance and school-book agencies are essentially the American professions. Everybody is going into them, and everybody is making money excepting me, on my eight dollars—but when I get back to Chicago, if I don't strike out on my own hook, it'll be because I change my mind."

It so happened that Pipkins directed his footsteps toward the spot which was the scene of Lillian's narrow escape from the bullet of the vengeful Sioux. Appearing as if it were as secluded a place as he could find, he spread his handkerchief upon the grass, sat down upon it and began to smoke and "meditate."

And just as he did so, he observed a piece of paper folded and lying upon the ground. By way of joking with himself, he whistled and beckoned with his fore-

finger for it to approach. Then he leaned forward, and as he picked it up, observed that it was a letter.

“Directed to Lillian Prescott, too,” he repeated, in some surprise, as he turned it over in his hand. “That isn’t my handwriting, I’m sure, because I can’t write as well as that, for all I am a clerk in an insurance office.”

He held it close and far from his eyes, but he could not remember that he had ever seen anything like it before.

“I should like to know who has had the impudence to write to *her*,” he muttered, somewhat indignant. “She is to be *my* wife; that’s all settled. I haven’t asked her yet, but there’s no danger of her refusing. I never saw a girl yet that wouldn’t jump at the first offer, and I don’t believe there is a female living that would refuse *me*. (That’s between me and myself, of course.)”

Nevertheless the young gentleman was sincere in what he had uttered, although he had done it so secretly.

“That being the case,” he added, “it’s my duty to oversee her correspondence as far as possible.”

Whereupon he very deliberately opened Colonel Havens’ letter, and read it from beginning to end. He was not only surprised but furiously enraged, that any one should presume to address her, especially when the letter itself proved that the writer was aware of the “tender ties” that existed between the two.

“The scoundrel!” he exclaimed, clinching his fists; “if I ever meet him, I’ll chastize him. I’ll teach him how to interfere between a young couple devoted to each other. It’s time he learned the danger of doing so. Here he has been like the serpent that, after being warmed, turned about and bit you. Such is the ingratitude of the world!”

Pipkins carefully replaced the letter in the envelope, and then put it in his pocket and resumed smoking, the sober air of thoughtfulness upon his brow overshadowed by the vexation he had suffered from the discovery.

A light footstep struck upon his ear, and looking up, he saw Lillian approaching, her eyes upon the ground, and her countenance showing that she was disturbed by something, very manifestly the loss of the letter, which at that moment was carefully stored away in the breast pocket of Mr. Pipkins’ coat.

She did not look up until only a few feet separated them, and then she stopped short, with a slight exclamation of alarm.

“O, cousin! how you frightened me!” she exclaimed, with a laugh.

“Is there anything very terrifying in my appearance?” he inquired, in his cool, self-possessed manner.

“Nothing, whatever; but *anything* would have alarmed me.”

“What brought you here?” he asked, well satisfied of her real object.

“ I was looking for a letter that I must have dropped. Have you seen anything of it? ”

“ Whom was it from? ” inquired Pipkins, endeavoring to put on as stern a look as possible.

“ From a friend,” she replied in the careless tones of indifference, looking about her upon the grass. “ It is not of much importance, but I should be sorry to have it fall into the hands of any one else.”

“ Lillian,” said her cousin, in the tones of a judge about pronouncing sentence, “ sit down here a few moments. I’ve got something to say to you.”

The girl looked wonderingly at him, not dreaming that he was really serious. He had such a way of affecting a solemnity when in the most trifling of moods, that she was sure such was the case now. She unhesitatingly took her seat beside him, as she would have done were he her brother.

They sat in silence a few moments, during which she wondered what was coming, and he slowly puffed his meerschaum, languidly rowing away the smoke with his hand, as it kept drifting continuously into the face of the girl beside him. Finally he removed the amber from his mouth.

“ Lillian, dear, will you answer me a few questions? ” he asked, in a low, sad voice.

“ Did I ever refuse you? ”

“ Don’t know as you did, and I hope you won’t now.”

“ Not if I am able to enlighten you.”

“Do you know a young man named Havens? George Havens, I think. I believe he is a corporal or sergeant in the army.”

Lillian was at a loss to understand the meaning of this question; but believing that her cousin was jesting under the garb of seriousness, she answered with scarcely a second's hesitation,

“You mean *Colonel* Havens. Of course, we all know him!”

“What sort of a fellow is he?”

“Brave, handsome, gallant, talented and chivalrous.”

Pipkins turned toward her in amazement.

“Wouldn't you like to hunt up a few more adjectives? I don't think those are expressive enough.”

“They express *my* meaning,” she replied, with something of her coquettish manner, and with a buoyancy of spirits to which she had been a stranger a long time. “Do you wish me to be more explicit?”

“Not at all; fact is you are too explicit altogether. But why do you admire this fellow?”

“For the same reason they all do, he deserves it.”

“*Are you sure of that?*”

This question was one of those “fearfully mysterious” ones that are intended to imply a great deal. By the figure of *litotes* it may be said that it meant to inform his companion that she could not be certain of such a thing; but for all that she answered unhesitatingly.

"Yes, sir; I am sure of it!"

"*I ain't.*"

"That is all very natural, for you have no acquaintance with him. In such a case you ought to take my word for it."

"Umph! that's cool!" reflected Pipkins; "she is as independent as if she cared nothing for me. She hasn't learned to understand me yet. She doesn't know what a terrible nature I have when aroused." Then, turning to her:

"Lillian, to tell you the plain truth, I have reason to believe that this Corporal Havens—"

"Colonel Havens—"

"Is altogether unworthy of your love—I should say esteem."

"What reason have you for saying so?"

"I have it from good authority that he is—that he is—that is, real *cowardly*—a veritable poltroon."

"What is your authority?"

Lillian fired her questions with such bewildering swiftness, that poor Pipkins was unable to answer with promptness, and he regretted that he hadn't "prepared" himself for this business.

"Why—let me see—Colonel Jones, of Chicago."

"Where did he learn it?"

"He was with him at the battle of Bull Run."

"Are you sure that that was the battle?"

"Certain of it," replied Pipkins, determined to stick to *this* point at least, now that he had made it.

"It was at no other battle?"

"No other."

"You are sure it was Bull Run?"

"Absolutely certain."

Lillian laughed—that clear, rippling laugh of hers. A shudder of apprehension ran over Pipkins when he heard it. He felt like the soldier who hears the *pinging* of the coming shell, and knows that it is going to burst over his head.

"I do not see what there is to laugh at."

"*Colonel Havens was not in that battle.*"

It took fully a minute before Pipkins could recover from the shock of this reply, which was intensified by that silvery, rippling laugh of Lillian, who thoroughly enjoyed the discomfiture of her cousin. He cleared his throat, and drew his hand across his brow, as if striving to awaken recollection, and finally said:

"Let me see; by Jingo! I was mistaken."

"Then you ought to apologize to Colonel Havens."

"Confound it! that ain't what I mean. I recollect now that it was not Bull Run, but some other battle."

"What other battle?"

But Pipkins was not to be caught again.

"I have forgotten, I declare. It was on my tongue, but I cannot recall it."

Again that laugh of Lillian's rang out upon the air, and Pipkins began to feel as though he had been detected in something of which he ought to be ashamed.

"It won't do," said Lillian, as soon as she could command her voice. "I don't believe a word you say!"

“ Well, I consider that an insulting insinuation—”

“ Who cares if you do? ”

And the eyes of the “ airy, fairy girl ” sparkled so roguishly and her face glowed with such merriment, that the young man found it impossible to bluster, and smiled in spite of himself.

“ Can you not be serious? ” he asked.

“ Certainly I can, if there be any reason.”

“ I have something to say to you—something in which you are or ought to be interested, and I hope you will listen.”

“ Now speak the truth, 'Dolph, and none can be more respectful than you will find me.”

“ Are you engaged to be married to Colonel Havens?”

“ What a question! ” she exclaimed, with a laugh; but, at the same time, the painful thrill shot through her heart at the remembrance of the parting, and of the letter which had come to her in the darkness of the night.

“ But you haven't answered it,” he persisted.

“ If you are serious in asking your question, then I can say *no*—nor ever have been.”

“ For all that, he loves you.”

It was singular to Lillian that she should feel such pleasure at this remark, even though it came from such poor authority as her cousin.

“ How do you know that? ” she asked, impulsively.

“ His letter shows it.”

“What do you mean?” demanded Lillian, her face flushing with indignation. “What letter shows it?”

Pipkins very coolly drew the missive from his pocket—that missive which had caused her so much sadness, and for which she had been searching so long.

“I understand human nature well enough,” he added, “to see that that fellow is fairly beside himself with love. If you don’t believe it, I will read this letter out before all upon the island, and see whether they don’t agree with me.”

Pipkins was proceeding to unfold the letter, for the purpose of indicating some “particular passage,” when Lillian, thoroughly out of temper, demanded it of him in such an unmistakable manner that he could not refuse it.

“What business have you to read *my* letter?” she asked, all the laughter and merriment gone from her eyes, from which she was scarcely able to keep back the tears of vexation.

Feeling that it was incumbent upon him to demonstrate the lofty wisdom of his course in this matter, Pipkins roused himself, and said, earnestly:

“Lillian, it was my place to do so. You are the one who have acted wrong in not bringing it to *me* in the first place. *I* am the one who ought to have read it first.”

The consummate assurance of the man was so great as partly to dispel the anger of Lillian. His last remark proved that he was scarcely worth the dignity of

indignation. She carefully replaced the letter, and rose to go.

“Hold on! I ain’t through with you yet,” he called out; and, wondering what he could mean, she remained seated, and looked inquiringly around at him.

“You mustn’t forget the situation in which you are placed,” he began, with all the solemnity at his command. “I must compliment you, madam, on notifying him of my prior claim upon you, and I only hope you will ever act in such a manner that he cannot fail to see it. I will call him to account for this impertinence—”

When Fielding affirmed that the poisonous serpent which he killed had its companion somewhere in the vicinity he spoke the truth, for, at this juncture, Pipkins detected it gliding over the ground only a few feet from where the two were sitting. With a gasp of horror, he pointed his finger toward the horrid object. Neither dared stir, for fear of alarming the reptile and inviting its deadly blow.

The rattlesnake slowly glided over the grass and leaves until nearly opposite where they sat, when it elevated its head, waved it back and forth, and then went into a coil.

It was so far away that there was no danger of its striking them so long as each party maintained its relative position; but the trouble was that it had cut off their line of retreat.

Immediately behind them was the river, and it was

impossible to leave the spot without approaching closer to the poisonous reptile; but both edged as far away as they could without entering the water itself.

“By jingo! here’s a go!” muttered Pipkins, when in some measure he had become accustomed to the danger. “What shall we do, Lillian?”

“Call for help.”

“Don’t you try it. Just as like as not, if you open your mouth he’ll make a dive at you, and then it’ll be all up with you!”

“I cannot remain here in the presence of that dreadful creature. I would rather step into the river, and pass around out of its way.”

“And get another shot from one of the redskins on the shore.”

Lillian recalled that this was the very spot where she had so narrowly escaped death a short time before, and she shuddered at the thought.

To retreat or to advance was death. They were in a dilemma, indeed!

“We cannot save ourselves,” said Lillian. “There must be some one near at hand, and I will not call too loud.”

“Don’t do it just yet,” Pipkins hastened to say, “Like enough it will take a notion to move off. Confound it! why did it stop just there?”

“Is there no stone or stick that you can throw at it?” inquired Lillian, who began to think it was time her companion did something to protect them both.

"That's what I've been looking for," he replied, gazing down at the ground; "but I don't see anything suitable."

"If Colonel Havens were here, he would have killed the reptile on the instant."

This fired up Pipkins, who broke a stick from a branch overhead, and advanced resolutely to the assault; but he took good care not to approach too close. Brandishing it overhead, he circled around the reptile, fearful of coming near enough to strike, but keeping his eye upon his enemy all the time.

While circling in this manner his foot struck a stone, which he picked up, and hurled at the elevated head of the rattlesnake. Fortunately the missile went straight, and struck the very point at which it was aimed. The reptile writhed and twisted over and over upon itself fiercely for a few minutes, and then lay motionless in death.

Very naturally, Pipkins was elated over the success of his demonstration against their foe, and demanded of Lillian whether it was not well done.

"Very well, indeed," she replied, "and I am grateful for our escape. But I begin to feel a terror for this spot. Already death has threatened me twice, and let us stay here no longer."

"Where shall we go?" asked her cousin, halting after they had passed beyond the vicinity of the reptile."

"Back to the camp, where father and mother are."

“ But I had something more to say to you. I had not said all that I wished to,” he replied.

“ You said enough.”

He looked earnestly at her ; but she was in no mood to be trifled with, and so he was compelled to follow her back to camp.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RAFT

WHEN noon came, the heat upon the island was oppressive. Even the thick shade of the trees and undergrowth could not protect our friends from its enervating effects, and little was done except to lounge upon the grass and languidly converse upon the ever-important matter of their escape from the island.

At meridian there was no one who asked for food excepting Cato. The substantial character of the previous meals and the warmth of the day were such that it was hardly natural that they should feel any degree of hunger; and the pleasure of the coming dinner was somewhat marred by the knowledge that it was to be of the same character as the meals already taken. No food had been brought with them, and were it not for the piscatorial skill of old Jud, they would have been in a sad condition indeed.

The scout kept up his ceaseless tramp over the island and his vigilant scrutiny of the shores. More than once he had detected signs of his enemies, but they evidently contemplated no movement or demonstration during the day time, or at least while they were watched with such tireless sharpness.

Captain Swarthausen and Muggins had enjoyed a very interesting conversation, until they had tired themselves out, and they only exchanged words semi-occasionally. Fielding was reclining on the ground close to Edith Prescott and her mother, both of whom were listening to his words, or exchanging questions and answers with him. Quiet and self-possessed, and well-informed, he was always able to interest his auditors.

Lillian, when she returned with Pipkins, seated herself near her mother and sister, and joined in the general conversation, while the young gentleman himself relit his pipe, smoked harder than ever, and employed himself in "meditations" of the most decided kind. Matters were not in the precise shape to suit him, and he was endeavoring to decide himself as to how he was to right them.

It was no easy matter to settle this point, for he could not but admit that his cousin Lillian had quite a will and temper of her own, and when she chose to assert it, she did it in a manner that was unmistakable. He had just had an exhibition that confirmed that point.

In his wanderings to and fro, Jud Jenkins occasionally found time to saunter up to the camp of the fugitives and exchange a few words with them.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when he seated himself near them, with the remark that it was one of the warmest days he had ever experienced, and he added:

“I am powerful glad of it, too.”

“I can’t say that I am,” replied Captain Swarthausen. “I don’t particularly enjoy this climate, either when the thermometer gets up close to a hundred, or down to twenty and thirty degrees below zero, as it did last winter.”

“I don’t say that I enj’y it either, but if there don’t come a reg’lar screamer of a storm, I don’t see much chance of getting off this place.”

“Ah! I understand. You think this will bring the storm.”

“Very likely; when you see such a hot day as this, so fur north, it’s purty sure to kick up a rumpus among the elements, and bring the rain and darkness.”

“We can do without the rain,” said Pipkins; “but I understand that it is the darkness you want so bad.”

“Just that; but we won’t be likely to get one without t’other.”

“When I took my last peep at the sky, it seemed clear as at this morning,” replied Captain Swarthausen.

“That don’t make no difference. If I am not mistook, there will be one of the bigggest kind—”

As if in confirmation of the declaration that was upon the lips of the scout, the faint rumble of distant thunder was heard at this moment, and the faces of all brightened on the instant.

“It’s coming, sure!” added Jud. “That’s what I have been waiting for for the last hour.”

“Do you observe that also?” asked the captain.

A breeze was heard stirring the branches overhead, and its grateful coolness even touched the perspiring faces of the fugitives below, and then came another faint muttering of thunder.

“It will be a terrible storm when it does come,” said the officer; “the air is full of electricity. What’s that?”

A dull, increasing roar was heard, like the coming of a tornado; but it lasted but a moment, when it terminated in a crash that seemed to shake the very ground upon which they stood.

“What under heavens can that be?” asked Pipkins. “It was somewhere on the island.”

“It’s a tree that fell—a tree that oughter stand a half a hundred years longer.”

“Why, then, did it fall?”

“’Cause there’s a storm comin’. You needn’t laugh; it’s allers so. I’ve laid in the woods many a time at night, and heard tree after tree come crashin’ to the ground, and nobody can’t tell what made ’em, ’cept the storm coming through the air.”

“But every tree must fall some time,” said Captain Swarthausen.

“I know as much pr’aps about the woods as any of you,” said the hunter, somewhat impatiently, “and you can’t explain it *that* way. I’ve seen the thing too often. When a tree comes tearin’ down like that, in the middle of the day—and I’ll warrant you a dozen have fell

along shore—you can make up your mind that it's a sign of a powerful big storm.

The scout had lingered as long as it was prudent, and he now left his friends and walked to the upper end of the island, scrutinized both shores, and then examined the fallen tree, which was comparatively sound. From his position he could see far above and below upon each side of the stream, but nothing of a suspicious nature was detected, and he instinctively looked up the river.

His experienced eye discovered something at once, but so far away that he could only conjecture its character. At first it looked like some wild animal swimming down stream; then he mentally compared it to a canoe, bottom upward; but at last he resolved it into a sort of raft that was drifting with the current, and without any propulsive power of its own.

But from the moment he first caught sight of it he was well convinced that it was some contrivance of that people who never appear at a loss for means to mislead and deceive their foes; and, accordingly, he kept his eye intently fixed upon it for a long time, in the expectation of detecting a flash of the water that might reveal the hand of the agent controlling it.

However, no such evidence was discovered, and he concluded that if an enemy were really there, he was smart enough to give no tangible evidence of his presence.

Suspecting that this might be some artifice intended

to withdraw attention from the lower part of the island, old Jud called to Captain Swarthausen, and explained his apprehensions, requesting him to take his position at the lower point. This the officer willingly did, and Muggins received permission to accompany him.

Convinced that it could now be done with safety, the hunter gave his whole attention to the approaching object, still looking for some sign of human agency in its movements, and still failing to detect any, except what might be termed a general evidence.

Carried forward in the direction it was now going, it would be sure to strand itself upon the shingle at the upper end of the island—a termination of the voyage which a Sioux would not be likely to make. When, therefore, he observed it turning to the right, slowly but surely, he could no longer doubt the inspiring cause of the whole thing.

Jud raised his rifle and examined the cap.

“It’s all right,” he muttered; “when I begun this tramping business, I used the old flint-lock, and some of the Hudson Bay fellers stick to ’em yet. Only let me get a chance at the top-knot of this varmint, and I’ll spoil his fun for him.”

A nearer approach revealed that the raft, or whatever it might be termed, consisted of two trees, with their roots and limbs still to them. The latter seemed inextricably interlocked, and between these two the hunter was certain that at least one Indian was floating,

with his black orbs fixed upon the island, and with every faculty on the alert.

As it came opposite the point where Jud was standing, he walked down the shore, keeping concealed within the wood, but halting and peering out upon the nondescript every few minutes, until at last the lowermost part of the island was reached.

Not once had a foe been seen; and as it passed on below the land, he still remained invisible.

“ I’d like to know what *he* has larned,” muttered Jud, as he brought his rifle to his shoulder. “ Howsomever, I’ll show him that we ain’t fools in these parts.”

With a quick aim he discharged his piece, burying the bullet in one of the logs, near the centre. He had scarcely done so, when the tufted head of an Indian rose to view, and he cast one long, searching look toward him, and disappear again between the trunks.

The instant Jud caught sight of him he began re-loading as rapidly as possible, but before he could place the percussion upon the tube, the Sioux had sunk down out of sight, and he was baffled again.

“ You can go back and tell the others that there is one fool left here,” was the impatient exclamation of the hunter, at his own discomfiture.

Had Red Plume been present he would not have remained on shore and contented himself with firing at the trees as they floated by. He would have dived under the logs and engaged the Sioux in a submarine hand-to-hand encounter, and the probability of their

being more than one to encounter would not have deterred him for a moment.

Old Jud had done such things himself, but as his years increased, he had acquired a certain degree of caution, which caused him to weigh an important action before undertaking it. He saw nothing to be gained by the mere "sending under" of a redskin, except so far as it should demonstrate the bravery of the fugitives.

He kept the raft in view as it slowly worked its way toward one of the banks, until finally it was lost to sight.

Captain Swarthausen and Muggins had nothing to report, having detected nothing whatever of a suspicious character.

But, unexpectedly, Fielding had a report to give. When the others were sent off as sentinels, he went to the eastern side of the island, (which was the less threatened side,) he, like old Jud, suspecting that this might be a stratagem to cover some other movement of the aborigines.

At the moment the daring Sioux lifted his head and shoulders out of the water, and the hunter was reloading with all the speed possible, the Friend saw a large canoe glide a short distance under the bank, and then a dozen Indians filled it with the silence and celerity of phantoms.

He suspected that they intended to seize their opportunity and make a dash for the island while the atten-

tion of the fugitives was called in the other direction. But the rifle-shot of the hunter—over which he lamented as so useless—seemed to deter them, and they failed to make the start.

Fielding never once took his eyes from the singular scene, and stood prepared to alarm the others the moment it emerged from under the bushes. For several minutes they remained stationary, and then the canoe moved back again to its place, and every savage sprang out of it and disappeared.

It was fortunate that this was done. But for the shot of Jud, it is probable that a dash would have been made for the island. While it is hardly probable that the Sioux would have succeeded in massacring all the whites, as was their purpose, yet, in the desperate encounter that would have been thus precipitated, it is hardly possible that each of our friends would have escaped unharmed. It was, in truth, one of the lost opportunities for the aborigines, which could never again come to them in a similar shape.

When old Jud learned the particulars from the Quaker, he complimented him on his keenness, and remarked that there was still some hope of his becoming a tolerable hunter.

“What do you think of *that*?” asked the scout, as he removed his cap, and allowed the stiffening breeze to blow upon his forehead.

“What do you mean?” asked Prescott.

“*That* is what I mean!”

A regular rolling boom of thunder was heard almost directly overhead. The rapidly darkening sky gave the woods the appearance of twilight, while the wind blew almost without a second's cessation.

"Will you go without Red Plume?" asked Captain Swarthausen.

"I don't want to," was the hesitating reply.

"Suppose he doesn't return for several hours after night sets in?"

"What's the use of 'sposing any such thing?" the hunter asked, petulantly. "He'll be back here inside of two hours, and he'll be the guide in goin' down the river to-night, and I'll foller with the rest of you."

"And with these noble red men that are waiting for us to start," said Pipkins, perhaps revived by the refreshing cool wind.

"Like enough," replied Jud; "you can be sartin they'll foller powerful close if they think we've started."

CHAPTER XXX

ADRIFT

"NIGHT and storm, and darkness," came together. The distant booming of the thunder increased, coming nearer and louder, until the clouds echoed the peals. The moon was entirely hid by the dark, tumultuous masses of vapor that swept over its face. The red lightning played back and forth through the black masses, illuminating them with a vividness tenfold greater than at noonday, while the advancing rain looked like the gleaming spears of an innumerable army.

As night was closing in, and before the bursting of the storm, the scout had gathered his friends about him, and given them his ideas of what would be done during the coming night. The whole party, with the exception of Red Plume, were to embark in the larger boat. The Indian would take the lead in his canoe, acting as their pilot until all danger was passed.

A general feeling of uneasiness manifested itself at the failure of Red Plume to appear, and Captain Swart-hausen advocated starting without him. But he was

effectually silenced by the reply of the hunter, that if he were present at this time, no start could be made.

He explained by calling attention to the lightning, which was almost incessant.

To embark at such a time would insure the certainty of discovery from the Sioux, and failure would follow, no matter with what skill the attempt was conducted. So all that could be done was to wait until the lightning had ceased, or so slackened as to afford some opportunity for flight.

The boats were moored some distance away, and fearful that they might be blown loose, Jud passed over to look at them.

He was almost too late; for as he came up, he saw that the larger boat was still fast, but the canoe had been torn free, and was already a dozen feet out in the river.

This could not be permitted, and he plunged unhesitatingly in after it. A few powerful strokes and he laid one hand upon the gunwale; but, as he did so, he became sensible that the other side was in the grasp of some one else, and the thought of another attempt to steal the boats flashed through his mind.

The hunter was not unprepared for such a contest, and he reached down for his knife; but, at this instant, an exclamation acquainted him with the fact that he was confronted by Red Plume.

Red Plume almost instantly came ashore, and the

two had an earnest conversation of several minutes, wherein the Indian revealed the following :

There were between thirty and forty Sioux Indians, including the party who came from the lake, and they were inspired by the most vindictive ferocity, the desire of the majority being to massacre every one of the whites the moment they came into their power. There was so much risk in carrying prisoners, especially with Red Plume and old Jud free (for they looked upon it as impossible to secure *them*), that this seemed to be the only safe course ; and, in case the fugitives were overpowered, there was little doubt but this course would be adopted.

One of their chiefs and a number of their best warriors having been slain, they could not give over the pursuit until these had been avenged. They had already been baffled so continually that their impatience can be readily understood, as well as the reason why a large number advocated a charge upon them, without waiting for darkness to assist them. They were the ones whom Fielding had seen enter the canoe, and who were only turned back by the sober second-thought which followed the firing of old Jud's rifle.

Red Plume had mingled with the Sioux until he had learned fully their intention, which, as has been intimated, was to steal upon the island during the night, and massacre all of the fugitives. They did not forget the probability of their attempting flight in the dark-

ness, and they became remarkably alert with the departure of the day.

The raft which floated by the island and drew the fire of old Jud was an artifice to discover whether the whites were vigilant enough to make an attack unsafe. The result was not satisfactory, and there was a movement to send one of the Indians and Lige with a demand for them to surrender, but with the real purpose of ascertaining their prospective movements.

These messengers had not yet appeared, but Red Plume believed they would come within the next half hour. The incessant play of the lightning kept up such an illumination of the river, that it would be impossible for a boat to leave without detection.

When this announcement was made, Jud and Red Plume rejoined their friends, who, as may be supposed, were glad enough to see them both. An explanation was made of the dusky scout's continued absence, and the probable coming of messengers from the shore.

Then all were instructed that, if the messengers from the shore made their appearance, no means must be left untried to convince them that it was their intention to remain in their present quarters until the next day at least.

The rain had almost ceased falling, but the flashing of the lightning was as incessant as ever. It had lost its fierce, explosive character, and now flickered and flamed, as it is sometimes seen to do when unaccompanied by thunder.

Red Plume, Jud and Captain Swarthausen were watching from the shore, when the first announced that a canoe had left the mainland, and was approaching. A lightning flash, a second after, revealed a small boat, containing the negro Lige and an Indian, swiftly speeding across the breadth of water that intervened between the island and shore.

It was allowed to approach undisturbed, until it reached land again, and Lige stepped out, while his companion retained his seat.

The African stared about him for a moment, as if waiting for the vivid light to reveal his situation; and, at the instant it came, old Jud called out, in his gruff voice:

“What do *you* want?”

The negro started, and then took a few steps in the direction of the voice.

“Who am dar?”

“Old Jud. What be you after?”

“De Injins sent me ober to see you.”

We need not give in detail the conversation that followed, in which Lige artfully endeavored to persuade the party to surrender. On Jud positively assuring him that they had no intention of doing so until they were made to, he next tried to find out whether they had any intention of leaving the island in the course of the night. Of course, Jud gave him to understand that this they had no intention of doing, as they would be in greater danger, he cunningly insinuated, from the

Indians on the river than on the island. Having ascertained all he had been sent over to find out, and Jud and Cato proceeding to cross-examine him rather unpleasantly as to how he came to be in such high favor among the Indians, Lige, evidently ill at ease among his former friends, at every lightning flash edged nearer and nearer his canoe, until at last he entered it; and the next glance of him was in the boat, far out in the river, with the Indian paddling with all his strength and skill. They speedily rejoined their party, where no doubt a graphic account of the interview was given, with the emphatic assurance that the fugitives proposed remaining upon the island until the Sioux drove them from it.

They had nothing left to do except to await the time with patience when Red Plume should give the word to start.

Some excitement was created at this juncture by hearing the Sioux signalling to each other.

The general belief was that these calls were intended to apprise each party of the other's intentions, which meant a simultaneous advance upon the fugitives from both sides; but Red Plume, being appealed to, greatly relieved all by assuring them that nothing of the kind was meant. They were meant to satisfy the leaders of the Sioux that their followers were on the alert and ready for any movement.

A half hour passed, when the signalling among the Indians having by this time ceased, Red Plume gave the word for all to be ready to enter the boat, being

careful not to do so before the permission was received, while he started on a hasty survey of the island to learn whether any of the aborigines had landed.

Not a gleam of lightning lit up the Stygian gloom as he stealthily made his way through the saturated undergrowth, but his ears were as alive as those of the panther, and the dip of a paddle would have aroused his attention at once.

Nothing, however, was discovered, and he rejoined his friends, and gave the word, and the next instant the boats swept out into the current, and the eventful journey down the river was resumed.

Above, below, behind, in front, and on either hand, all was blank darkness. The Crescent River, swelled by the storm, flowed swiftly down on its winding way toward the snowy waters of Hudson Bay; the wild wind howled and moaned from the woods along the shore, and not a star was overhead to guide them on the way.

It was too late to turn back, even had they wished to do so. The Rubicon was crossed. Before them lay safety or death.

Which was it?

CHAPTER XXXI

DOWN THE RIVER

THOSE were critical moments to the fugitives. Not a word was spoken, even in whispers, and every heart was praying that this midnight blackness of the heavens might continue for an hour more, or until the swiftly flowing river had carried them beyond all danger of the Sioux, who were waiting so eagerly for their prey.

So dense was the gloom that not one in the larger boat could discern the canoe of Red Plume, that was scarcely a dozen feet in advance.

Old Jud stood upright in the bow, with one of the oars in hand, but even he was unable to make out the form of his guide in front. The Indian now and then made a slight splash with his oar, and by this sound alone was the hunter guided.

While it was desirable to gain all the speed possible, yet the boats drifted with the current only. Little help could be gained by the use of the oars, while there was imminent risk of the sound betraying them to the Indians, who were undoubtedly on the river at that very moment, somewhere in the immediate neighborhood.

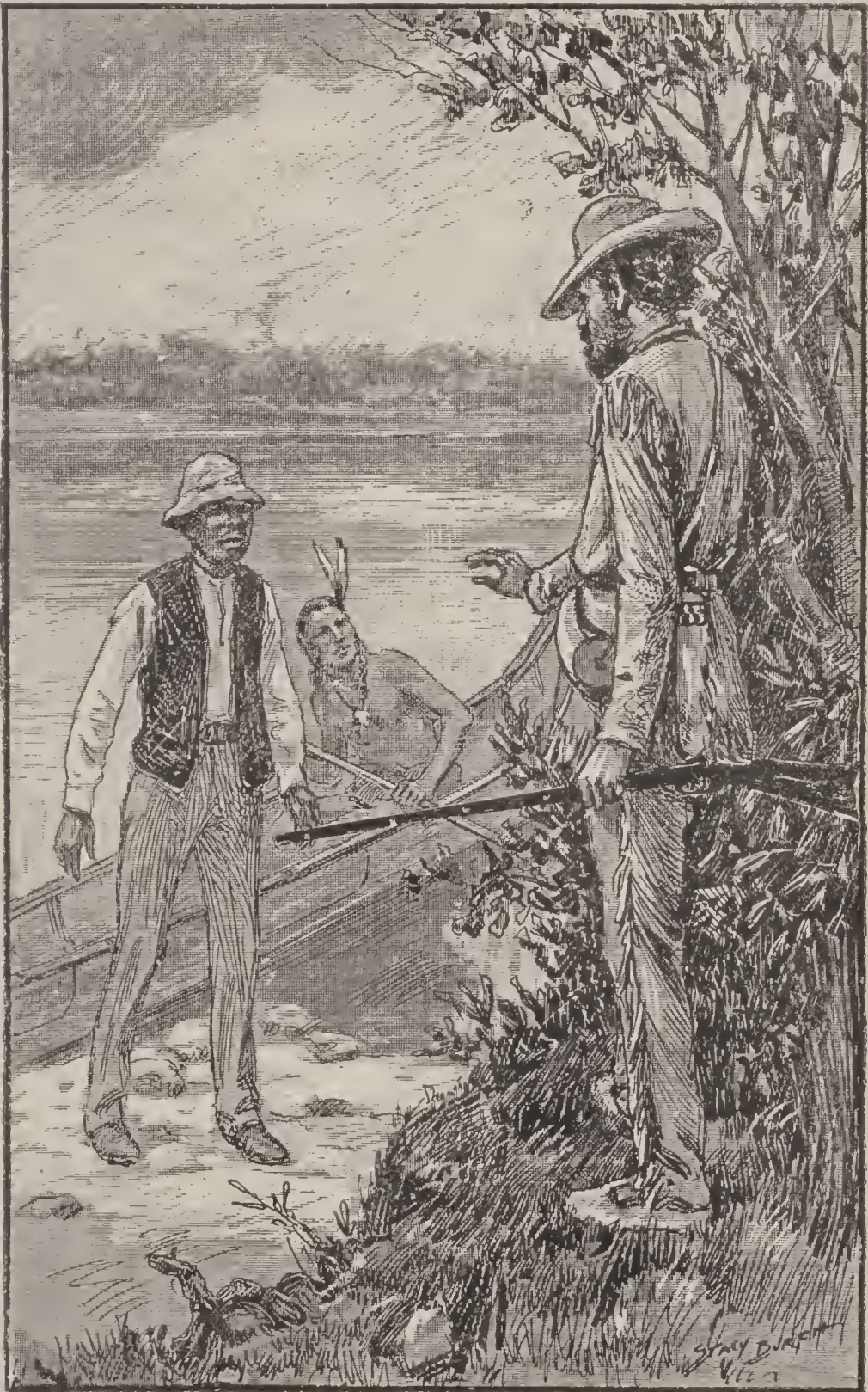
With every rod passed, the hopes of our friends rose

Still the boats and their precious cargoes swept swiftly down stream, and still the utter blackness of night continued. Afar in the sky there had been one or two of the faintest flickers of lightning, but they were mere scintillations upon the great world of darkness below, scarcely penetrating the margin itself.

The wind blew very gently, and every ear was strained to the utmost for the sounds dreaded above all others. When this silence rested upon all, a faint, tremulous whistle—so faint and uncertain in its character, indeed, that more than one of those who heard it believed it came from the air above them—floated to them on the night air, and brought with it the chill which one feels at the sure signal of some swiftly approaching peril.

At this moment, when none of the company expected it, a powerful, all-pervading flash seemed to set the whole atmosphere a-flame—shore, river and woods standing out with the distinctness of mid-day. Every breath was suspended and every arm paralyzed for the moment. So sudden was the gleam that neither Red Plume nor old Jud gained a glimpse of the river in the rear—the place from which the danger was apprehended.

And out of all the party there was but one who saw the river behind them. That one was Lillian Prescott, who by accident was gazing backward toward the island, and who, in the blaze of the lightning, discerned two canoes of Indians between her own boat and the



Old Judd cried out, in his gruff voice : “ What do *you* want ? ”

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island with both of them headed down stream and coming in a direct line toward them.

Old Jud asked in a cautious whisper :

“ Did any of you see anything of the varmints? ”

Lillian deemed it was time for her to say something, and while the others breathlessly listened, she stated that she had observed two large canoes full of Indians but a short distance astern, coming directly after them.

“ Qu’ar,” he remarked. “ You’re sure there ain’t no mistake about it? ”

The girl could be nothing else but certain.

Old Jud in his cautious way acquainted Red Plume with what Lillian had said. The hunter had observed previous to this, that the Indian was gradually shying off toward the left, and he was compelled to use his paddle with considerable power; but now the savage backed until the boats touched, and then stooping down, Jud grasped the stern of the little boat, and the redskin began using his paddle stealthily, but with a power which was felt by all.

He kept turning toward the left; for, if the Sioux were so close at hand, the only safety of the fugitives consisted in keeping concealed in the friendly darkness. Their enemies, not knowing where to look for them, would be far more likely to miss than to encounter them.

Another fact was observed at this time by the more experienced of the party, and it could not but increase their uneasiness. Since the cessation of the storm the

sky had begun to clear in a measure, and there was every prospect that there would soon be sufficient light to see objects on either shore from the centre of the river.

After paddling for a few minutes in this manner, the fugitives noticed the dark outlines of the trees upon the western bank.

Having reached this point, Red Plume now rested on his oars, and they all drifted with the current again. As yet he had gained no idea of the location of his enemies, except what was received from Lillian, and he placed implicit reliance in what she had affirmed to old Jud.

Laying his boat alongside of the larger one, the Indian exchanged a few words with the hunter, explanatory of his intentions, and then he vanished in the darkness, his purpose being to learn the whereabouts of the Sioux.

Old Jud shoved the boat a little further out into the stream, so as to be beyond danger of striking the shore, and then sat down where he could say a word or two to those near him. After a little pause, passed in conjectures as to the result of Red Plume's hazardous experiment, the sharp ears of the hunter detected some suspicious sound out in the river, and after attentively looking out in that direction, they all had the pleasure of seeing the little canoe coming out of the darkness with the single Indian propelling it.

The Sioux did not approach any closer to his friends, but taking a position a rod or so in advance, waited for

the others to follow. Old Jud thought this rather singular, as he was quite anxious to hear his report of the situation; but he knew there was reason for it, and it looked as though there was a necessity for haste.

Accordingly the hunter plied his paddle with all the skill and power at his command. This had no great effect upon the boat with its large freight, but it served to give it the direction which was necessary.

Instead of keeping to the left bank, Red Plume headed diagonally across the stream, so as to strike the right shore. Old Jud followed him as dutifully as a dog ever followed his master, but he felt at the same time that there was great risk in attempting to cross a stream like this, when it was well known that a treacherous enemy was at no great distance.

The river was nearly crossed, when a short, wolf-like whoop, came from the shore they had just left, and Red Plume replied to it in precisely the same tone.

This diagonal direction Red Plume continued until he had approached almost near enough to the shore to touch it, when he began floating down stream as before.

Old Jud was confident now, that the Indian would row back to him, and give him some idea of the movements of their enemies; but, to his annoyance and surprise, he still kept his distance.

After drifting a half hour or so, old Jud began to feel somewhat impatient, and he gave the canoe a shove or two, as a hint for Red Plume that time was getting too precious to waste in this manner; but the Sioux paid no heed to the movement, and he and his boat

floated along as though they were part and parcel of each other.

Prescott, who was sitting near Jud, heard him mutter to himself:

“It’s powerful queer what’s got into Red Plume to-night.”

At this moment they reached the mouth of quite a broad creek, which put into the Crescent River from the right shore. It had quite a moderate current, showing that, although it discharged a large volume of water, there was but a slight fall in it.

As soon as the mouth of this was encountered the Indian turned his canoe, and began paddling up stream, pausing, after he had taken a few strokes, to beckon to old Jud to follow him.

The hunter did so unhesitatingly, but with a misgiving for which he could scarcely account. Going in opposition to the current, he was enabled to make comparatively little headway, and Red Plume seemed somewhat impatient, frequently paddling a short distance in a circular direction, and then signalling to the fugitives to follow.

“There must be danger,” said Prescott, “or he would not be in such a hurry.”

Old Jud made no reply; but those who were watching him at that moment saw him suddenly lay down his paddle, and as suddenly catch up his rifle. The next instant it was discharged, and their Indian guide threw up his arms with a fearful shriek, shot through the heart by the bullet of the hunter.

CHAPTER XXXII

SIOUX VERSUS SIOUX

IT WOULD be impossible to describe the consternation produced by the shot of old Jud. Prescott excitedly sprang to his feet.

“My God! you have killed Red Plume!”

The hunter was then engaged in sweeping the bow of the canoe around, and hastening the boat back out of the creek which they had entered; but he turned his head so as to reply.

“Killed Red Plume!” he repeated, in the husky voice of passion; “that ain’t Red Plume—it’s one of the varmints trying to lead us into a trap!”

A shudder of terror shook all at this astounding declaration, and the hunter bent furiously to his task.

“Where is Red Plume then?” asked Captain Swart-hausen, as soon as he could recover himself.

“I don’t know, and haint got time to think; but I’m sartin that if we don’t git out here powerful soon, there won’t be a scalp left among us. So don’t bother me with any more questions.”

And paying no heed to the surmisings of his friends, he turned his whole attention to the arduous work before him, and, with the assistance of the current, soon

gives quite a rapid motion to the boat. Debouching into the river, he turned down stream, and continued his progress at a rate which all of the company would have deemed impossible until they saw it done.

It will be remembered that old Jud was perplexed at the action of the Indian who took the place of Red Plume, but his suspicion was not fairly awakened until the entering of the creek. Then he was close enough to observe that the red plume which distinguished his friend, and which he had worn so many years that it gave him his appellation, was wanting!

Instantly the thought of treachery entered his mind, and by a powerful movement he approached nigh enough to the canoe to gain a fair view of its occupant. The result of this deliberation was such as to make him certain of the trick that was attempted upon him, and in the prompt manner mentioned he gave the daring Sioux his quietus.

This singular interchange of canoes came about in this manner:

When the lightning gleam revealed the Indian canoe to Lillian Prescott, the boat containing the fugitives was also seen by the Sioux themselves. Not only that, but they detected Red Plume in his canoe, acting as guide. With the readiness peculiar to the aborigines, one of the latter instantly originated a stratagem, which, if carried through with nerve and skill, could not fail to result in the destruction of the whole party.

This plan was simply to substitute himself in the

place of Red Plume, without attracting the suspicion of the whites.

The major part of the Sioux were upon *terra firma*, while about a dozen were searching the river in their large canoe. These put into shore, where a smaller canoe was secured, into which the daring Indian ventured, and then went out upon the river to await his chance.

It was at this juncture that the vigilant Indian discovered one of the tiny vessels crossing the stream in front of him, and a little cautious manœuvring revealed the interesting fact that it was the renowned Red Plume himself, probably engaged in reconnoitring the river, and who had so narrowly missed coming upon the Sioux.

The savage made his companions acquainted with the condition of things, stated his proposed plan of operations, and then crossed boldly over to the other shore to take the place of Red Plume.

We have shown how cleverly this was done, and how it all but succeeded. It was the intention of the Indians to decoy the fugitives up this creek quite a distance, to the base of a series of rapids, where those upon shore had congregated, and were waiting, prepared to massacre them all.

Our friends had actually entered the mouth of the creek, as we have already shown, when the suspicious appearance of the head-gear of the guide awakened the apprehensions of old Jud, and the stratagem, so nearly successful, was discovered.

No doubt the Sioux were confident that they had successfully played a sharp trick upon their old enemy, Red Plume; but, before the matter was ended, they were compelled to modify their opinion.

When our dusky hero shot across the river, so close to the redskins that the single one in the canoe detected him, the discovery was mutual; and when this daring enemy turned toward the other shore, Red Plume suspected what game was up, and followed him far enough to make sure of his purpose.

“Very good,” reflected the former; “if my brother takes the place of Red Plume, then will Red Plume take the place of his brother.”

And he came back and unhesitatingly put himself in the advance of the hostile canoe. The occupants of the latter very naturally were surprised at this unexpected return of their champion, and made several inquiries as to the cause. Red Plume replied, that the whole party of fugitives were descending the stream, but that the time had not yet come for the exchange of situations. He had little fear of detection, and managed his case so well that no suspicions were excited.

The interchange of signals, and the action of the Sioux when opposite the mouth of the creek alluded to, gave Red Plume an inkling of the plan for the massacre of the fugitives, and he therefore did his utmost to draw them beyond the place. This required considerable delicacy and skill, but he succeeded at last, with the assurance that they would speedily return. A grim

smile of triumph lit up his face as he saw his enemies drawn away from their prey.

Having drawn the Sioux away from the creek, Red Plume conducted them a considerable distance down stream, when he again left them, under the pretence of making another attempt to secure the situation of guide for the fugitives.

In spite of the confident assurance of old Jud, as he plied his paddle, more than one of his companions had serious misgivings of its truth—not of the sincerity of his belief; but there was the shuddering fear that an awful mistake had been committed.

Great, therefore, was their relief, when the genuine Red Plume suddenly shot out of the darkness and laid his canoe alongside the larger boat.

A few words passed between old Jud and Red Plume, and all was understood.

“The varmints are right below us,” said the former to his companions, as he turned the bow of the boat across stream again, and renewed his labor with the paddle.

There was a gradual increase of the moonlight which was perceptible to all, and which kept their fears constantly alive, and caused more than one anxious glance back upon the river.

The two parties were now so close to each other that it seemed impossible that they should much longer remain invisible. Sensible of this, both Red Plume and old Jud approached the other shore with great care.

Here they were under the disadvantage of moving in a much slower current, which was more than compensated by the increased likelihood of escaping discovery; but the danger of this was so imminent that at Red Plume's suggestion, those who possessed rifles held them ready for instant use.

Providentially, the result of Red Plume's stratagem was a greater success than he had dared to hope. When he left the Sioux upon the other side of the river they drifted slowly downward awaiting his coming, and growing somewhat impatient at what, to them, was a causeless delay.

But as the time wore heavily away, and naught was seen of either Red Plume or their own warrior, a vague idea of something wrong began gradually filtering into their brains, and they finally turned about and pursued their way up stream again.

As they did so, a sort of wailing whoop was heard from the direction of the creek, and they paddled rapidly in that direction. At the mouth of the stream they met a canoe containing three warriors, beside a fourth, who was stark dead and stiff from the shot of old Jud.

The Indians at the rapids had become uneasy at the delay, and several of them, shortly after the dim report of the rifle, began moving down the banks of the stream to give notice of the coming of the boat. A considerable distance away, they caught sight of the canoe drifting with the current. They could see the form of an Indian in it, but his head was bowed on his breast, and

there was a stone-like quiet about him which was extremely suggestive. One of the Sioux swam out to him, when the truth became speedily known.

The Sioux saw that they had been out-generalled, but they could not fail to understand that the fugitives, in all probability, were below them in the river, straining every nerve to reach Fort Grandon ahead of them. Accordingly, they loaded the two canoes with all that they would contain, and leaving the others upon the shore, started in pursuit.

Sensible of the value of time, Red Plume permitted no further delay in the progress of the boat. Hitherto there had been no thought of raising the sail, as with their enemies anywhere in the vicinity, such a conspicuous object would have insured discovery; but that objection had vanished with the widening distance between pursuer and pursued, and when Captain Swarthausen proposed it to Jud, he replied:

“Just what I war goin’ to do.”

“Does Red Plume think it advisable?”

“He told me to do it, some time ago.”

It required but a few minutes to put the mast in position and elevate the sail. There was quite a brisk wind sweeping down the river, so that all circumstances were favorable, and the fugitives swept southward at a much greater rate than the powerful limbs of the hunter could drive them with the paddle.

So soon as they were fairly under way Red Plume again left his friends, and glided ahead and out into the

river, where he would be more likely to detect the approach of danger.

Old Jud, pretty well exhausted from his great labor, seated himself upon the gunwale for a breathing spell. The night was warm and close, and the cool air, as it fanned their faces, was refreshingly pleasant.

The boats proceeded rapidly onward, and our friends passed the time in conjectures as to what the coming day would bring forth, when all at once Red Plume made a low whistle, which old Jud said was an admonition of silence, and accordingly, all conversation, even in whispers, was forbidden.

Shortly after, the fugitives swept round quite an abrupt bend in the river, and immediately caught the star-like glimmer of a fire, apparently from the very centre of the river. The hunter instantly lowered the sail, and despite the prohibition of Red Plume, he whispered to his friends:

“ ‘There’s another island, and there be a lot of the varmints upon it.’ ”

Red Plume instructed his friends to lie idle in the stream until he could learn whether it was safe to attempt to pass by the island or not. As it was still a considerable distance away, it was not deemed best to obey this order literally, and so he contented himself with merely taking down the sail and allowing the boat to drift with the current.

During the absence of their guide, old Jud occupied himself in scanning the suspicious fire-light, to see

whether any signs of human beings could be detected near it.

The fire burned with a steady glare, which looked as if it had been replenished recently; but, closely as he looked, he could detect nothing of any figures passing before it.

In the course of a half hour Red Plume and his canoe emerged from the darkness, and he and old Jud had a few minutes' earnest converse. The guide had even landed upon the island, and made a thorough examination of it. The result was the discovery of a dozen Sioux, all stretched out and sound asleep by the fire. He could only conjecture what it meant, and that conjecture was that they were a portion of a party, awaiting the return of the others.

After considerable hesitation, it was decided, in view of the great importance of getting forward without further delay, to make the attempt to sail by the island during the darkness, and without learning whether any of their enemies were watching along shore.

CHAPTER XXXIII

RED PLUME'S JOURNEY

THE hunter carefully hoisted the sail again and taking advantage of the favoring breeze, the boat was soon gliding smoothly and rapidly down the river.

It was arranged that, as before, Red Plume should keep the lead, and that old Jud should follow the centre of the stream, between the island and mainland. By doing this they gained the additional impetus of the current, and at the same time did not approach too closely the shore, where, after all, the real danger may have lain.

For the purpose of greater safety all, excepting the hunter himself, lowered their heads below the gunwale of the boat, as they neared the glowing camp-fire. As the sides were not of sufficient thickness to be bullet-proof, no immunity from danger was secured by this artifice, except in so far as it might deceive any foes into the belief that the vessel was devoid of all occupants, save the fearless scout, who sat bolt upright in the bow, directing by word Captain Swarthausen how to steer.

It requires no ordinary nerve for a man to remain exposed to a secret shot, disdaining to adopt the ordinary

means of safety, of which his companions are only too glad to avail themselves.

But old Jud never flinched, as, impelled by wind and the increasing current, the boat shot swiftly forward into the narrow channel, on the right of the camp-fire. From his position he could see the dark figures of the Indians stretched out as motionless as death, and whether all this unconsciousness was assumed or not, was a matter which would soon be settled.

Red Plume was already below the camp-fire, and old Jud reflected that, whatever occurred, his safety was secured.

He looked intently in toward the shore as they went past, but the same impressive stillness continued, and the next moment he drew a sigh of relief as he saw the lower extremity of the island glide backward, and had the satisfaction of knowing the dangerous point was passed.

There was a general congratulation when the fugitives were safely beyond this danger, and Prescott remarked that all were indeed in God's special keeping.

Out again upon the dark river, with their faces turned southward, and the stiff breeze bowling them along at a rapid rate, the prospects of our friends greatly brightened, and a feeling of cheerfulness pervaded all.

Several of the party took occasion to indulge in slumber, while those who did not, chatted and talked the hours away, until Red Plume awaited the approach of

old Jud, and informed him that daylight was so close at hand that they would be compelled to lie-by until night again.

Some distance further down stream was a small creek, up which the scouts would have been glad to run the canoe; but the time was too short to permit, and old Jud accordingly put in shore, and unshipped his sail.

The stoppage aroused all the passengers, who were naturally alarmed until the cause was explained.

It was necessary that the boat should be entirely hid from the view of any who were passing up or down the river. Accordingly, it was drawn clear up the bank, so far indeed that there was no possibility of its being detected or stolen, unless by overcoming those who had it in charge.

Here it was made into a sort of couch for the females, who were thus given the opportunity to stretch their limbs, and enjoy a few hours' quiet sleep—a luxury which, from the force of circumstances, had been denied them while descending the river.

All, excepting the hunters, stretched themselves out upon the leafy ground, where they were permitted several hours of undisturbed repose, while old Jud and Red Plume acquainted themselves with the peculiarities of their position.

Another matter now forced itself upon the attention of all. They had been a long time without food, and the question was as to how the means was to be obtained for breaking this enforced fast.

Old Jud relieved their minds on this point by informing them that, while they had been reposing, Red Plume had gone off in his boat for the double purpose of seeing what he could do toward obtaining some food, and also of reconnoitring. They had not very long to wait before a soft ripple plashed on the beach, and down through the interstices of the bushes the canoe of Red Plume was seen to glide against the shore, and the Sioux stepped out, picking up several large birds from the bottom of the boat.

After drawing the boat up the bank, he made his way up among his waiting friends, when it was discovered that the birds in his hand were *cooked*!

None the less enthusiastic for being subdued were the exclamations which followed this discovery. The Sioux, appreciating the danger of starting a fire in this portion of the wood, had prepared the meal a goodly distance away, and then brought it to them by water, doing it with a skill which shut off all possibility of pursuit.

The birds were large, plump and luscious, and although they made rather a moderate meal, it was sufficient, and most keenly appreciated by all who partook of it.

While considerable pleasure was produced by the admirable meal furnished by their guide, yet he brought other tidings that produced far different feelings. When he first started out, he had serious intentions of making his way to Fort Grandon, not to procure help—

for he was too proud to ask that—but to learn the most advisable route by which to reach it.

He had gone but a short distance, when he turned back, satisfied that there was no way possible of going to the fort during the day-time. Less than a mile away, he came upon a farm-house which had been recently burned, while the family, numbering seven individuals, lay partly in the house and partly out of doors, mangled in a manner too revolting to describe. There were signs which showed that all this had taken place within twenty-four hours; and the Sioux were ranging over all the surrounding country in their relentless search for the unoffending settlers.

Under these circumstances, it would be impossible for a party of the number of the fugitives to make their way, either through the wood or by water, without attracting attention. Between their present location and the fort was a large portion of open, settled country, across which it would be a difficult matter for a single person to make his way without detection.

Had there been any opportunity of succeeding, it was the intention of Red Plume to attempt to reach the fort by a circuitous route through the woods; but he saw no chance at all, and it was decided to remain where they were until nightfall, when the journey would be resumed.

Noon came and passed without anything of note taking place; but at that time, Red Plume, who was constantly on the move, came in with the dispiriting in-

formation that their old enemies—the lake party—were descending the river.

They had probably been searching along shore for them which explained their delay. He said there were three canoes of them, and in the foremost was the negro Lige.

The Sioux descended the river quite cautiously, showing plainly by their manner that they were on the look-out for “signs.” It is scarcely necessary to say that they discovered none, and in the course of an hour, vanished around a bend in the appropriately named Crescent River.

Shortly after their disappearance, several signals were heard, which looked as if they were in communication with some of their kindred on shore.

Nothing more was seen or heard of the party, and early in the afternoon Red Plume left the company with the declared purpose of visiting Fort Grandon and learning as nearly as possible the precise character of the intervening ten miles which lay between them and safety.

The afternoon passed drearily enough to those who were left along the river. Occasional intimations were received of the proximity of their enemies, but they remained undisturbed until nightfall.

We will follow Red Plume, who, toward dusk, was a mile or two distant, speeding upward in his canoe. He had reached and entered Fort Grandon, and was thus far on his return. Having made his journey en-

tirely by land, he had secured a canoe, and was now making all haste to rejoin the fugitives, who he well knew were so anxiously looking for him.

He had incurred considerable risk, both in going and coming, but by concealing his scarlet plume, he suffered little delay in making his way through the hordes of redskins that appeared to overrun the entire country.

As yet he had seen nothing of the old enemies of the lake, and he was looking for them. A mile or two below the spot where the fugitives were in waiting, he came upon them, their canoes resting against the bank, while they appeared to have been joined by quite a number of others, and were holding some sort of a jollification, most likely over some massacre in which they had found an opportunity of joining.

Red Plume had replaced his ornamental head appendage, so that there could be no mistaking his identity, and paddling out to the middle of the river, in plain view of them all, he stood up in his canoe and uttered a shout of defiance.

“Dogs of the Sioux! why did you not prevent the pale faces from going away in the night to Fort Grandon? Red Plume cares nothing for you!”

With which he sat down in his boat again, and taking his paddle resumed his course up the stream. But this taunt was not taken in meekness. An angry whoop was sent back, and a half dozen sprang in the nearest canoe and started in pursuit.

Red Plume allowed them to approach quite close,

and then raising his rifle took deliberate aim at one of the redskins and shot him dead. Then he plied his paddle with such skill that he gained rapidly upon them, and firing their useless guns, they turned about and retreated, followed by his taunts and whoops of defiance.

Old Jud had heard and recognized the report of Red Plume's gun and, as may be supposed, had no little curiosity to understand what it meant; but as there was no return shot, everything looked favorable to his dusky friend, and he awaited his coming with very little apprehension as to his welfare.

The scout came in his cautious and quiet manner, and was among the fugitives before they knew it, old Jud being the only one who saw him as his canoe approached.

All were anxious to go, and impatiently awaited the decision of their dusky friend.

When all declared their readiness to start, they were surprised by learning that the remaining ten miles were to be made by land. Red Plume showed the impossibility of avoiding the Sioux on the river, on account of the bright moonlight. The peril was hardly less by overland, but they had no other choice, and it was taken.

They started in the same order as before, Red Plume taking the lead, while a considerable distance behind him came old Jud at the head of the party. As it was necessary for the Indian, while their way led through the wood, to keep so far ahead as to be invisible, it was

arranged that he should communicate with the hunter by means of signals.

All being ready, the fugitives started, beseeching kind Heaven still to lead them through the dangerous wilderness.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE OVERLAND ROUTE

THE moon shone with unclouded splendor, and but for the shadow of the trees, the fugitives would have found little difference between the night and day.

They moved quite rapidly until several miles were travelled, when unexpectedly the wood terminated, and they found themselves upon the margin of the open country.

From where they stood, the land sloped up for a considerable distance, so that it was as if they were at the bottom of a large hill. Up this they began walking, Red Plume still at their head.

Reaching the top they found that the prairie was of the undulating or rolling character, and that within a few hundred yards of them were the ruins of a farm house. In the bright moonlight they plainly distinguished the blackened ruins, telling impressively of the fearful scenes that had taken place but a short time before.

Halting but a few minutes, Red Plume started on, leading his friends a few rods to one side of it. The chimney had been made of stone, and stood silent and blackened, pointing mutely to heaven as if indicating

the only refuge at such a time as this. A rough mass of charred logs and boards, told only where a home with its happy inmates formerly stood.

There were the outbuildings that had shared the same fate, the garden and the fields of corn and grain trampled by the infuriated redskins in their eager work—all these bore witness to the terrible devastation sweeping over Minnesota, and to the necessity of the strong military arm to drive it back.

Our friends gazed upon these dismal ruins for a few minutes only, and then they started down a sort of rough road, formerly used by the farmers of this region in going to the fort, or to the steamboat landing further down the river. This, however, was soon deserted, as there was manifestly great danger in following it.

The Indian, silent and stern, held his place a rod or so in advance, scarcely ever looking over his shoulder to see whether he was followed, while old Jud strode after him with his long rifle in hand, his keen eyes darting from side to side, and behind him came Captain Swarthausen, Muggins, and the rest of the party, scarcely less watchful and observing than he.

Their way for the most part led through cultivated fields, but they had progressed less than a mile, when they came in sight of a small house, which had evidently been the scene of a fierce resistance. It was only partially burned, and the fences and vegetation formerly surrounding it were all levelled with the ground. The windows were all broken in, as is sometimes seen

when the walls of a building have been saved from the fire; and brave as was the conduct of the defenders, they had been forced to succumb at last.

While yet some distance from this, the party halted in obedience to the stopping of Red Plume, who seemed to look upon the battered structure with some distrust. Standing in the open field, he beckoned to the hunter to approach, while he requested the others to remain where they were until his return.

“He thinks that very likely some of the varmints be there,” he said, a few minutes later when he walked back and rejoined them.

“Why not avoid the house by taking altogether a different route?” asked the captain.

“We’ll run into worse places—so we’ll wait here till he finds out for himself.”

“Look!” exclaimed Pipkins, pointing toward the building.

All eyes were turned thitherward, and in the clear moonlight two figures were seen to issue from the door, and walk toward them.

“Do those Indians see us?” asked the wonder-stricken Prescott.

“They are coming to meet Red Plume.”

“What does it mean?”

“One of ’em is an Injin and the other a white man.”

The listeners were more mystified than ever. There was a significant smile upon the face of the hunter, as he said:

“ The redskin is the Otter ; and the white man—wall, take a good look at him, and make him out for yourselves.”

“ He has quite a resemblance to my nephew, Colonel Havens,” said Captain Swarthausen, “ but, of course, it cannot be he.”

“ That’s jist who it is,” replied old Jud.

“ Impossible ! he is far away—”

“ Only a couple of rods or so.”

“ But it cannot—”

The two personages were now conversing with Red Plume ; and to settle the question of the identity of one of them, Captain Swarthausen abruptly walked toward the trio, while the others watched him with an interest difficult to imagine.

They heard the exclamation of surprise, and then saw the captain shaking the hand of the young man ; and then they knew that the hunter had spoken the truth, and they were astounded.

Almost instantly the parties mingled, and there was a handshaking all round.

“ Just as I suspected,” laughed Captain Swarthausen, taking upon himself the duty of explaining to the others the singular appearance of his nephew among them. “ When he was on the point of starting, there came an order countermanding the other, and instructing him to wait where he was until further orders were received.”

“ How was it that Red Plume reported him absent when he visited the fort ? ” inquired Prescott.

“ So he was ; but he learned that he was in the neighborhood of the fort, and was expected in every minute ; and Red Plume told the Otter by what route he was going to bring us in, if he brought us in at all. Shortly after, Colonel Havens returned, and learned the whole particulars, and he and the Otter started out to intercept us.”

“ And did Jud know of this ? ” inquired Prescott.

“ He knew that the colonel was near the fort, but he didn’t think it best to notify us, for fear that there might be a disappointment. Isn’t that so, Jud ? ”

The hunter replied in the affirmative, and a general smile passed round.

When Lillian Prescott comprehended that Colonel Havens really stood before her, she could scarcely suppress her feelings ; and he felt her hand tremble as he took it in his own. She believed, all along, that if she ever met him face to face again she would instantly ask his forgiveness with the meekness of an humble child ; but a strange revulsion of emotion overcame her, and although she bravely strove, she was utterly unable to utter a word. She merely returned the pressure of his hand, and made no response to his eager question as to whether she was sorry to meet him.

“ The country is full of Sioux,” said Colonel Havens, as the party stood all together ; “ if it hadn’t been for the Otter I never would have gotten through.”

“ And how are we to get back again ? ”

“ There will probably be fighting before we reach the fort ; but I hope we shall succeed for all that.”

Red Plume and the Otter were talking together, and it took but a few minutes for them to reach an understanding. Reinforced by this weazen-faced redskin a still better plan of procedure was adopted by the fugitives.

Their route, it must be understood, led them over roads, across fields, by the margin of small tracts of timber, and through a section which, for a new country, was quite well settled. As it was known that parties of Sioux were constantly ranging over this territory, the great peril was of encountering some of them.

The more certainly to prevent this, Red Plume, the Otter and old Jud assumed the lead. The first was not only in advance, but was at considerable distance to the right; the second took a position as far to the left, while the hunter occupied the centre.

Captain Swarthausen compared them to skirmishers thrown out to feel the way. By adopting this plan, it was almost impossible to run into any great danger without its detection by one or all of the advance scouts.

Time was too precious to admit of any great delay, and Red Plume had his party on the move within ten minutes after the first greeting of Colonel Havens.

The captain was so pleased at meeting his nephew, that for a considerable time he could pay no heed to any one else, and absorbed his entire attention; but the veteran could not help perceiving, after a while, that he occasionally cast longing glances backward, where

Augustus Pipkins was doing his utmost to entertain his cousin, Lillian Prescott. He would have been blind not to have perceived the cause; and, accordingly, he gradually edged away to his place beside Muggins, who, from some cause or other, seemed more dispirited than ever—so much so, indeed, that he found himself scarcely able to draw him out. When questioned, rather sharply, however, he declared a wish that he might fall before reaching the fort; for, since the death of his wife, he had no desire whatever to live, and would welcome the bullet that would take him away.

Augustus Pipkins affected a lofty indifference, as he observed Colonel Havens step out from the front of the party where he was walking, and await the approach of the rear, where he and Lillian were journeying side by side.

The young lover never would have done this had he not been encouraged by the pressure of the hand and the look of Lillian's face when they first encountered after their estrangement.

Bowing politely to Pipkins, he supposed the latter would step aside and yield his place to him; but the Chicagoan chose to disregard his wishes, and walked the closer to his cousin.

“Will you be kind enough to allow me a few minutes with Miss Prescott?” asked the colonel, lifting his hat with the most studied politeness.

“I do not see the necessity; she is under my charge,” was the grandiloquent reply of Pipkins.

"I will be obliged to you, if you will leave me for a short time," said Lillian herself, who, as may well be supposed, was not a little indignant at this response.

"I regret that I must refuse to comply with your request," was the astonishing answer.

There was no telling what this matter would have culminated in had not Edith come to the rescue.

"Adolphus, you will not refuse to give *me* a few minutes," she asked, as Fielding helped the case by moving away, and offering his place to her.

"Certainly," said Pipkins, as, with all the grace at his command, he took his place beside the sister, who straightway devoted all her ability to entertaining him, and withdrawing his attention from the couple behind him.

The latter lingered and loitered until they were as far in the rear as was prudent, and still they were silent. Now that the opportunity so ardently prayed for had come to Lillian, she found pride struggling again in her heart, and threatening to smother all the resolutions she had made.

"Did you receive my letter?" he finally asked, in a voice so low that he knew no ears but hers heard him.

"Yes," she responded, in a trembling voice; "you never should have written it."

"Why not?"

"Because there was no necessity for it."

"I thought there was; I had every reason to believe so."

“ I treated you badly,” she said, forcing down her pride. “ I called to you to come back, but you would not heed me.”

“ I did not hear you,” replied the colonel, as his heart gave a great bound of delight at the confession of her who held all the love of his soul.

“ If you had heard me, would you have come? ” she asked, looking him archly in his face.

“ No power could have prevented me. Never have I known such sadness as has been mine since I last saw you. When I found that I had a chance of assisting you and your friends, I came out with the Otter, determined to do all that was possible, except to recognize or speak to you. When I met you, I concluded to shake hands, so as to escape occasion for remark upon the part of the others; and then your actions led me to ask for the opportunity to say a word or two to you, and now that I have obtained it, what shall I say? ”

“ You may tell me some other time,” she replied, looking toward him, while her eyes spoke the great love that welled up from her heart.

“ Dearest Lillian, I cannot express the happiness this night has given. If my separation from you plunged me into the lowest depth of despair, so has this meeting raised me to the highest pinnacle of delight. If you were trifling with me, I was over-serious with you, and impelled you to your assumed indifference. But the cloud that came between us, and that dimmed our future, has cleared away, and all is well. Is it not so? ”

Lillian answered with an inclination of the head, for she durst not trust her voice. Was she not as happy as he? Had one suffered more than the other? If both had been equally sorrowful, were not both equally glad?

They walked side by side in silence, but their hearts were in communion, and each felt that there was no one upon earth whom they could envy. Hardly conscious of the distance passed, they had followed instinctively their friends in front, scarcely thinking of the peril which was really deepening around them, until now it may be said they awakened to a sense of their situation, and turned their thoughts to others as well as themselves.

They felt the propriety of rejoining the others, who more than once had looked at them in a way which showed that they suspected, even if they were not certain of what was going on.

At this time they were crossing a sort of prairie, covered with long grass, but uncultivated and unenclosed by any fence or boundary marks. It seemed to stretch for several miles in advance, and was unrelieved by any visible object except a distant cabin, which, as dimly seen, bore no signs of disturbance from hostile bands.

The three scouts thrown out in advance were faintly visible, now and then, as they steadily made their way over the prairie; but as yet there was no communication between them and those in the rear.

It was observed that they so shaped their course as to

leave the house spoken of on the right. As the fugitives advanced nearer to this it was seen to be composed entirely of logs, and so far as they could judge, it had not been disturbed by Indians—a circumstance which more than one of the party was disposed to look upon with distrust, although Colonel Havens could see nothing in it to excite apprehension.

The humble-looking structure was passed by a few hundred yards, when the crack of a rifle was heard from the front, followed by another, and another. Our friends paused, undetermined what to do; but they had not long to wait, when Red Plume, the Otter, and old Jud were distinguished running toward them at full speed, all converging in a manner which showed that each was doing his best to reach the house that the main party had just passed.

“*Into the cabin!*” called out the hunter, in his stentorian voice; “*the varmints be comin’!*”

“That’s so,” added Colonel Havens. “Hear them shout—and yonder they come!”

It looked as if there were fully fifty of them, mounted on horseback, shouting and screeching like fiends, and in full pursuit of the three flying scouts.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE PRAIRIE FIGHT

THERE was no longer any thought of whom the settler's cabin might contain, but all turned and ran toward it.

Those in the front, hearing the frenzied cry of Dinah, hesitated; but the captain waved them on again, and then spoke to Muggins:

“Come, we shall have to lend her a hand, for she can't help herself.”

Running back a rod or two, they caught her, one by either arm, and she almost ceased her efforts, relying upon them.

And all this time some fifty mounted Sioux were bearing down upon the scene, shouting, screeching, whooping, like so many fiends, and frequently discharging their guns, and brandishing the weapons over their heads.

Red Plume had not detected them until the whole horde dashed out of the woods in front, and bore unhesitatingly down upon them. They could only fire their guns and turn back with utmost speed.

All three, being remarkably fleet of foot, reached the deserted building slightly in advance of the others, and

hurried in. There was but a single door and window, and both of these had been battered in, so that there was no means of barring them against the entrance of a foe.

But the rude hut offered shelter; and, satisfied on this point, they turned to the assistance of their friends.

Pipkins was the first to enter, and immediately behind him came Prescott and his wife, Colonel Havens and Lillian hurried immediately after, and then Cato; but Edith had stumbled, and, ere she and Fielding could reach the shelter, an Indian horseman rushed between them and made straight for the girl.

A horrified scream went up from the mother, and she fell swooning to the floor. The rifle of the Friend was not loaded, but clubbing it, he drew it back and awaited the onslaught of the savage; but scarcely a dozen feet separated the two, when the Sioux threw up his arms with an ear-splitting shriek, and rolled from the side of his horse, slain by a bullet from the rifle of old Jud.

Seeing how narrowly he had escaped, the Quaker lifted the fainting Edith from the ground, and carrying her as he would have carried an infant, made a dash for the house, and, assisted by many willing hands, was drawn within with his precious burden, just in time for both to escape a fearful death.

But the return of Muggins, Captain Swarthausen and Dinah was cut off, and a half dozen Indian horsemen were already between them and the house.

“They are lost unless we save them!” exclaimed Colonel Havens. “Who will follow me?”

With which, the colonel leaped through the door, closely followed by Red Plume and the Otter, while Prescott allowed himself to be restrained by the hunter and his family.

The assault of the Sioux proved that they were mounted upon horses of all degrees of fleetness, for scarcely two of them rode at the same speed; and, at the moment the three men rushed forth to the rescue of their friends, about half a dozen were closing around them, and attempting to cut them down.

Captain Swarthausen had drawn a revolver, with which he had managed to arm himself, and coolly awaited the attack. Muggins was without weapons of any kind; and seeing that he could be of no assistance to either of his companions, he made a plunge for the cabin, in the hope of making his way between the horses during the confusion of the moment.

By this time he was encircled by the furious horsemen, and while he paused, bewildered and not knowing which way to turn, he was shot dead by one of the Sioux on the outer edge of the circle. The poor fellow uttered one groan, and expired without a word.

“There is no use of trying to stay here,” Captain Swarthausen had said, a few minutes before. “Follow me as close as you can, Dinah, and, with the assistance of our friends, maybe we shall succeed in reaching the house.”

It was a fortunate thing that the captain possessed a loaded revolver, for the Sioux appreciated that weapon.

As an indication of what he could do, he sent a ball crashing through the nearest bronzed skull, and then instantly wheeled and pointed it at the next; but the terrified redskin ducked his head, and threw himself on the opposite side of his horse, with such celerity that the aim was disconcerted, and the captain forbore to fire, unwilling to throw away a single shot.

“I’m with you!” shouted Colonel Havens, as he bounded to his side, pistol in hand. “Be careful, and don’t let them get behind you.”

Side by side the two soldiers advanced, firing in every direction, but with a care which showed their fear of being left with empty chambers. The Indians kept closing around them, but their manœuvres were not a little obstructed by Red Plume and the Otter, who were whisking and dodging hither and thither with a dexterity that could not be surpassed. Each held a long hunting-knife in his hand, and fought with that weapon alone.

Dinah did her best to keep as near the officers as possible, and she came near stumbling over them several times. The greater portion of the distance was passed, when a daring Sioux forced his horse between the parties, and she found herself shut entirely from all assistance.

We have shown how Colonel Havens and Captain Swarthausen had all they could do to attend to their own safety; neither Red Plume nor the Otter paid the least attention to Dinah, caring little whether she escaped or not.

And thus it came about that she was left friendless among her enemies, who showed a curious anxiety to make a prisoner of her.

Two Sioux seized the bulky lady with a grip of iron, and despite her furious resistance, she was cast upon the back of a horse, and one of them vaulted upon the animal behind her, holding her firmly in position, against her most determined struggles.

The horsemen then headed toward the woods, and put his animal to a rapid gallop. Dinah, all the time, never ceased her struggles, despite their manifest inutility, as the savage held her with great strength and firmness.

But when he was yet a good distance from the wood he observed another Indian on horseback speeding toward him. He paid little attention to his brother, except to see that he was better mounted than himself, and that their routes were converging.

Nearer, nearer, they came, until scarce twenty yards separated them, when the stranger shouted, in the Sioux tongue:

“Halt!”

Not a little surprised at such a command, the Indian partly reined up his horse, and looked inquiringly at him. As he did so, he saw the upraised rifle flash, heard the crack, and never saw or heard anything more.

“Massa sakes! what’s going to ’come ob me!” groaned Dinah, as she rolled to the ground, with her inanimate captor. “I do b’lebe I’m shook to pieces.”

“Run to the woods and hide!” called the other Indian, as he sped away again with his horse at full speed.

Amazed and bewildered as the woman was at her sudden deliverance, she yet had the good sense to obey the injunction of the Indian, and she accordingly hied toward the woods at her best speed.

Chiefly through the distraction caused by the manoeuvres of Red Plume and the Otter, Colonel Havens and Captain Swarthausen were enabled to reach the building, from which old Jud had rushed to their assistance, and the three dashed in again, in time to escape anything more than a few scratches.

Red Plume followed the next moment, bearing in his hand a reeking scalp, which no one knew how he had obtained, and with a whoop of defiance he leaped into the building unharmed.

“Where is the Otter?” asked the hunter.

“He is lost! he is lost!” exclaimed the panting colonel. “Is there no way to save him!”

“He ain’t lost,” replied Red Plume; “he go way—he no come in. See!”

As he spoke he pointed out on the prairie, where a thrilling scene was visible.

The Otter seemed to be in the centre of a group of fully twenty horsemen, who were pressing and riding against each other in their efforts to cut him down or take him prisoner, while he dodged and leaped hither and thither, avoiding their blows with an agility that was little short of the marvellous.

So absorbing was the spectacle that the other Indians, who, from the nature of the case, were prevented from mingling in the fray, sat motionless upon their horses, watching the efforts to make a prisoner of the daring scout.

And the fugitives, forgetful of their own danger, crowded the single door and window, and scarcely breathed, while all this was going on.

Suddenly, while they were gazing with rapt attention, the Otter shot from beneath a horse's belly upon the extreme periphery of the circle of horsemen, and ran with astonishing speed directly across the open plain to where the riderless animal of the first Indian who had been shot was cropping the grass.

By the time his enemies had fairly comprehended his intention, he was upon the back of the horse like a monkey, had turned his head toward the woods, and was going at full speed, with the twenty Indians in pursuit.

We have shown how this was the fleetest horse of them all, and the Otter speedily left them so far behind that they gave up the pursuit; and, as already narrated, he came up to the captor of Dinah just in time to save her and send her hiding to the woods.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE LAST STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

A CHEER of admiration went up from the fugitives as they witnessed the matchless exploit of the Otter, and saw him and his horse vanishing with the speed of the wind over the prairie.

The iron features of Red Plume relaxed with a grim smile as he saw the triumph of his comrade, but he said nothing. He knew what his manœuvre meant from the beginning.

With the disappearance of the Otter, our friends came back to the alarming truth regarding their own situation.

“Back, all of you!” commanded old Jud, turning about and spreading out his arms, as if he were driving sheep. “Keep away from the door and winder, or you’ll get bored with their lead.

The struggle of which we spoke in the preceding chapter eventuated in impressing the Sioux with a fair estimate of the courage of the fugitives, and they showed a hesitation in attacking them in their stronghold, which was noticed and commented upon by more than one of our friends.

The horsemen galloped back and forth upon the

prairie, and, from their position, continued firing several dropping shots at the house, but none of which entered either the door or window.

Thus matters stood, when Red Plume perceived something crawling through the prairie grass, in the vicinity of the house. It all at once flashed across his mind that this must be the Indian who had been shot by old Jud, and whose horse was afterward captured by the Otter. He had evidently been only wounded, and had hitherto lain motionless in the hopes that his friends might rescue him. Taking advantage of the attention of the whites being directed toward his party, he was now endeavoring to crawl off to the rear of the house, where he would be comparatively safe.

It was not characteristic of Red Plume to allow any such proceeding directly under his eyes. With a muttered exclamation to Jud, he lay down his rifle, placed his hand upon his hunting knife, and in a crouching posture ran rapidly out toward the man.

When the chief saw Red Plume stealing rapidly toward him, he knew who was coming, and he struggled upon one knee, and drew his knife to defend himself, for he expected no mercy from *him*.

The friendly Indian approached with due caution, and in the wounded condition of his foe, he easily disarmed him. Then, instead of finishing him, he caught him in his herculean grasp, and ran rapidly toward the house, which he safely reached.

The Sioux were unwilling to give up their chief, even

after he had been carried in triumph within the building. They rode back and forth over the prairie, in front of the house, as though they were bewildered, and at a loss what to do. Red Plume and old Jud attentively watched them, and when one of their horsemen galloped up to within a few rods of the door, they saw that he wished to parley with them. He held up both hands, as evidence that he carried no weapons.

“Will Red Plume come forth and talk with his brother?” he asked, in the Sioux tongue.

The Indian unhesitatingly stepped forth from the building, and advanced half-way to the horseman.

“What does my brother wish?”

“Leaping Panther, the great chief of the Sioux nation, is wounded and in the power of Red Plume.”

“Red Plume took him prisoner.”

“The Sioux warriors are bowed with grief, for their chief is with them no more. We will give six of our best horses if Red Plume will send Leaping Panther back to his people.”

“We want no horses,” replied Red Plume, “for the Sioux have more than we, and they could do us no good.”

“We will give you horses that will carry you to the fort, and the Sioux warriors shall harm no one, if Leaping Panther comes back to us.”

“Leaping Panther shall go back to his warriors, if they will go away and allow us to pass over the prairie to the great fort.”

The emissary immediately closed with this offer, and rode back to his companions to acquaint them with the good news.

Red Plume now made known his plans. Upon the return of the messenger, he would accept his offer, but make the condition that the Sioux should retire over a hill a short distance away, and there await the coming of their chief, who would be conducted to the top by Red Plume himself. If these conditions were agreed to, the Indian intended to send the fugitives out of the house the very instant the Sioux were beyond sight, and they were to take a round about way to the woods and the fort.

Only a few minutes elapsed, when the Sioux messenger returned, riding still closer to the door, while the rest of the horsemen hovered several hundred yards away.

Red Plume waited with an assumption of indifference for the savage to renew the conference.

“If Red Plume will return Leaping Panther to his warriors, then shall he and his friends go to the big fort without harm.”

“If my brethren will go over yonder hill, and remain, then will I bring Leaping Panther to them.”

These conditions were not exactly pleasant, but they could not help themselves, and they announced their acceptance.

As the messenger was about riding away, Red Plume called to him, and insinuated that, as Leaping Panther

was pretty badly wounded, he would like a horse to assist in carrying him back. This was another rather impudent demand, which was submitted to somewhat reluctantly.

The savage dismounted, and Red Plume advanced and took his animal, leading him back to the house, where there was quite a party deeply interested in the proceedings.

Red Plume and his friends watched the messenger as he ran rapidly back to where the main body were awaiting him. There he paused, and he could be seen consulting earnestly with them.

Suddenly, the whole band turned about and rode to the hill, and vanished over the top.

The minute they had disappeared, old Jud said:

“Now make yourselves ready.”

There were few preparations to make, and such as they were they were completed almost as soon as the command itself.

Red Plume now placed his animal between the door and the place where he judged their enemies to be. Then he and old Jud stepped out, bearing, or, rather, helping to support the suffering chief between them. By this means the view of the Sioux was effectually shut off from the door.

The minute matters were put in shape, the word was given for the fugitives to start.

They had been apprised of the danger they ran, and fully instructed as to what they should do. So they

stole out like so many phantoms, one by one, until they had all vanished out of sight behind the building.

Here every one of them sank upon his hands and knees, and began crawling away, keeping the house so far as possible between them and the suspicious elevation that had been pointed out by old Jud, just before starting.

Some ten minutes were frittered away in assisting Leaping Panther to the horse, and getting him ready to mount. At the end of that time, matters were deftly arranged, so that old Jud slunk out of sight, and followed hard after his friends, without any Sioux on the hilltop suspecting what was going on.

After an extraordinary amount of labor, Leaping Panther was fairly astride the animal; but it was manifest that the position caused him great pain, so Red Plume pulled him off, and assisted him up on the other side, not helping the unfortunate fellow much, but gaining a few minutes' precious time, which was all that he expected or cared to do.

At last the two were astride the animal; and what with the several delays that had occurred it was fully half an hour since our friends had started. Any further delay would excite the suspicion of those in waiting.

Still, Red Plume advanced with great tardiness until he had begun to ascend the hill, when one of the Sioux rode over the hill as if to meet him. The captor instantly halted and waved him back.

His gesture was obeyed, and when he had disappeared, Red Plume resumed his journey. Reaching the top, he saw the Sioux drawn up in a body.

He sat motionless upon his horse, until everything was in shape to suit him. Then, suddenly lifting Leaping Panther from his horse, he dropped him to the ground, wheeled about and galloped down the hill at the top of his horse's speed.

So suddenly was this done, that he had well nigh reached the cabin ere his movement was fully comprehended. Observing their leader fall to the ground they supposed he had been killed, and dashed forward to see. But a few seconds were sufficient to convince them that Red Plume had honestly kept his bargain.

The instant Leaping Panther could make himself heard, he told his warriors that the whites had already fled, and ordered them to be pursued.

They lost no time in following Red Plume, and when the pursuing horsemen reached the top, they saw him speeding across the prairie, straight ahead in a direction at right angles to the one taken by the fugitives, and while some followed, others rode up to the house to make sure that their chief was not mistaken. They were speedily satisfied on that point.

Red Plume's object was to draw the Sioux away from the whites, but he failed. They suspected the ruse, and while some followed him, others went right and left, it so happening that some six or eight of them took precisely the route by which they had attempted to escape.

It was a cruel lot that condemned our friends to be trifled with by fortune, as they were now doomed to be. They had gone so far on their hands and knees, that they had deemed it safe to rise to their feet, when they hurried forward with all the speed of which they were capable.

Old Jud, as usual, took the lead, and behind him came the others, the females bearing themselves like heroines, and no one complaining.

Old Jud was not acquainted with this section, but he knew the general direction to be followed, and he did it to the best of his ability.

Something like a furlong intervened between them and the forest, when they saw his scared face, as he looked back and exclaimed :

“ There they come ! Make for the woods ! ”

At the same instant they heard the whoops behind them, and all started to run. There was a prospect of gaining the cover of the trees, from which they might defend themselves, and they sped over the ground with the men supporting and encouraging the females, and all still hopeful.

“ *Stop !* ” commanded the hunter ; “ *it's all up ! there's no use of goin' any further !* ”

He pointed toward the wood, from which the horrified whites saw another party of horsemen issuing directly in front of them. They were thus between two companies, and to escape from both was a moral impossibility !

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE END

THE despairing exclamation had hardly escaped the hunter, when Colonel Havens flung his hat high in air and shouted :

“ Saved ! saved ! saved ! ”

At the same time he danced about like a madman, and the next instant Captain Swarthausen and Augustus Pipkins imitated him.

For out of the darkness of the wood came, not twenty mounted Sioux, but twenty mounted soldiers on a full gallop. The Otter had made all haste to Fort Grandon with the tidings that Colonel Havens was surrounded by Indians, and unless a large force was sent to his relief, his death was certain, and the commandant sent twenty of his best Indian fighters, not knowing that the fate of the colonel was inextricably interwoven with that of a certain band of fugitives.

Simultaneous with the discovery of their friends, the soldiers fired a volley at the approaching Sioux.

The sudden onset of the white horsemen created an instant panic among the Sioux, who wheeled about, like a flash, and thundered away over the prairie, bearing a number of dead and dying with them.

In the space of ten minutes not a hostile Indian was to be seen. And the relief had not come a moment too soon. Wearied and exhausted; tortured by anxiety and fear; now revived by sudden hope, then paralyzed by despair, the fugitives were scarcely able to walk.

The Otter gave up his horse to Colonel Havens, who took Lillian Prescott in front of him, while the first seated himself behind Red Plume. Some kind hearted frontiersman made a similar arrangement, by which Fielding and Edith were supported by another, Mr. and Mrs. Prescott upon another, Captain Swarthausen and old Jud upon another, Augustus Pipkins and Cato upon still another, and so the whole party at last were mounted, and turned their faces toward Fort Grandon.

Something like a couple of miles still intervened, and they were slowly progressing, when, to their great surprise and delight, they came suddenly upon old Dinah, who had been lying concealed in the woods, and hearing them laughing and talking, had hastened to join them. After an affectionate meeting with her son Cato, she was hoisted upon the back of a powerful beast, and they started off again.

With such a strong escort, our friends bade farewell to all fear, and Fort Grandon was reached an hour later without any disturbance from the Sioux, who were hovering in the wood.

The subsequent history of the Minnesota Massacres is too well known to need further reference here.

When safety had again been restored to Minnesota,

the principal ones of those whose fortunes we have followed for a time, returned to Sleeping Water Lake, and again reared their houses and established their homes.

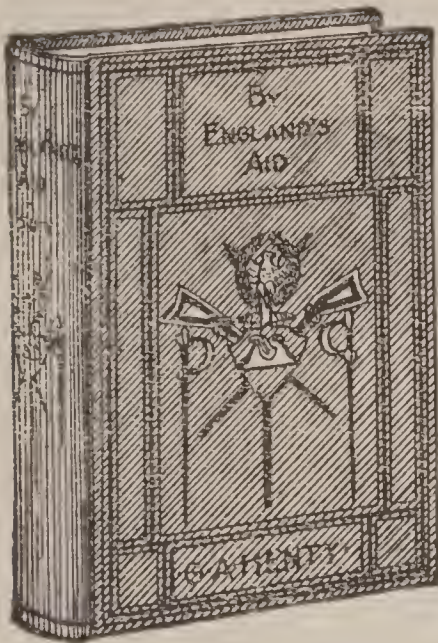
The parents of Fielding the Friend occupied a pleasant little cottage, and near them dwelt their beloved son and daughter.

Augustus Pipkins, at last accounts, was still unmarried and engaged in life insurance business in Chicago.

Captain Swarthaussen was now a colonel in the regular army, which, he affirmed, was the culminating point of his ambition. When away from his duty, which is indeed rare, he makes his home in the "Bird's Nest," as he calls the delightful little cottage, where the general and his wife Lillian, and their mischievous young heir (named after the old veteran) consider themselves so happy that they envy no man or woman on earth.

Jubal Judkins, or "Old Jud," as he was more familiarly termed, was killed several months afterward, while serving as a scout upon a military expedition. He received a soldier's burial, and more than one bronzed face was moistened with tears, as they laid the honest fellow away in the ground, there to take his long, last sleep.

Red Plume and Otter moved further west before the advancing tide of civilization, and all subsequent record of them has been lost.



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